FUTURE

AUG. SCIENCE FICTION 35¢

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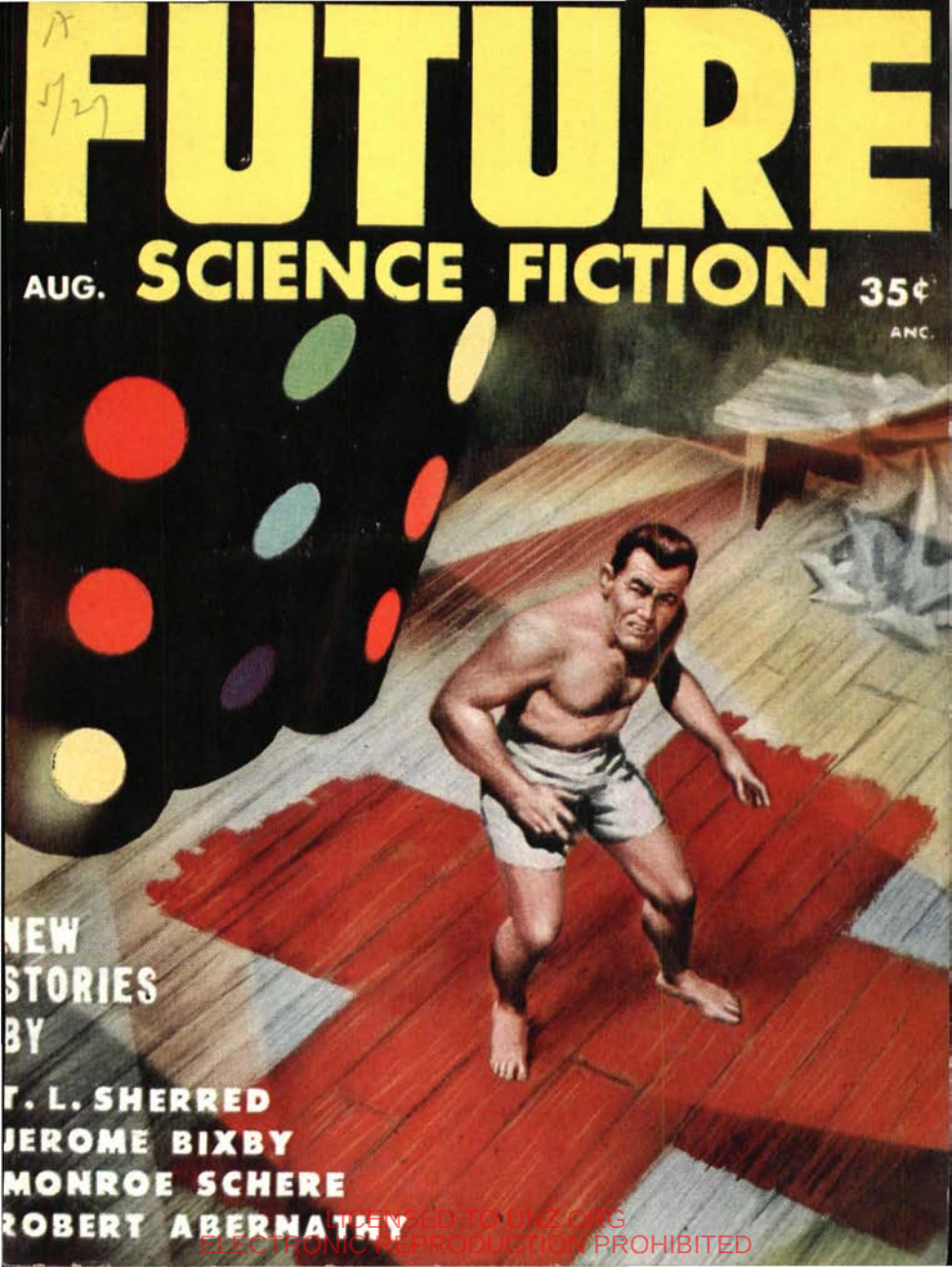

NEW STORIES BY

T. L. SHERRED

JEROME BIXBY

MONROE SCHERE

ROBERT ABERNATHY

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EDITORIAL

WHO IS THE FAN?

IN THE February 1954 issue of *Science Fiction Quarterly*, we published a short story by David Grinnell, "Last Stand of A Space Grenadier", which seems to have stirred up quite a controversy. The story dealt with the attempt, by an alien culture at war elsewhere in the galaxy, to recruit the minds of Earthlings in order to direct suicide-sorties against an unspecified enemy. The method used by the aliens seemed to be some sort of hypnotic rapproachment, achieved through visual patterns presented on the television screen —during the course of what was an ordinary juvenile science fiction TV show. Apparently youngsters were most susceptible to the hypnotic patterns; on the conscious level, they merely formed clubs, the ultimate motive of which was to get more youngsters to watch the show; when the victims were asleep, however, their psyches were somehow transferred to the area of alien combat. The story concerns itself with one particular youngster who is caught up in all this; he is pretty much of an all-around science-fiction fan—not exclusively a follower of TV science-fiction.

The crux of the matter was that this control not only put the victim under a terrible strain, but when the alter-ego was killed, this was apparently fatal to the psyche back on Earth; the victim suffered a complete breakdown. The young fellow, who is the leading character in the story, and a close friend, have deduced the situation. They realize that they are trapped in it. They do not believe that anyone can help them, and don't think it is worth the attempt to try to enlist the sympathy of their parents, or other adults. The way they try to solve their problem is to enlist other youngsters in the "space grenadiers", in hopes that others can be accepted as substitutes.

Now, granting the circumstances, is this method the characters in the story chose a believable one? They could not understand the full nature of what they were up against; they had no reason to

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Who Is The Fan? [*Continued From Page 3*]

believe that anyone else could deal with it any more effectively than they could themselves; they saw no course of action that suggested any hope of successful opposition. Thus, what they did was to try to wriggle out from under; they entered into a kind of collaboration with forces they believed to be overwhelming.

A number of readers, active fans themselves, have protested bitterly, in high moral indignation that (and I quote), *"Fans certainly are not, and do not behave, as Grinnell indicates."* The writer of the letter from which this sentence is lifted (the letter was published in full on pages 85-86 of the May, *Science Fiction Quarterly*) also takes exception to Grinnell's having the youngster in question indulging in a bit of regressive behaviour under the stress of extreme anxiety. The writer states further, "They have also, manfully, resisted playing with their lips when they spoke, too. The sight of a fan of any age suddenly bursting into tears would be one to remember, I think."

Now any psychologist, psychotherapist, etc., (and many laymen who have observed the behaviour of persons, of any age, under extreme tension and stress) can testify that such types of regression are extremely common. I do not think that anyone who understands much about human behaviour would be greatly surprised at such manifestations, or consider them as necessarily a sign of "cowardice", or "lack of intelligence", on the part of the victim. The circumstances which Mr. Grinnell portrays in his story, the kind of anxiety, is far greater than any we have known in reality; yet human beings frequently show as many regressive traits, and seek as controversial solutions (that of attempting to appease the "enemy" by offering substitute victims) under far more comprehensible circumstances.

ON WHAT grounds, then, could we assume that "science fiction fans" would never never behave as other human beings frequently behave, given analogous situations?

The only grounds we can postulate are that the "science fiction fan" is a special type of human being, capable of resisting pressures and tensions and anxieties which frequently overwhelm ordinary human beings; therefore, anyone who acts in the way an ordinary human being—even a highly intelligent and reasonably

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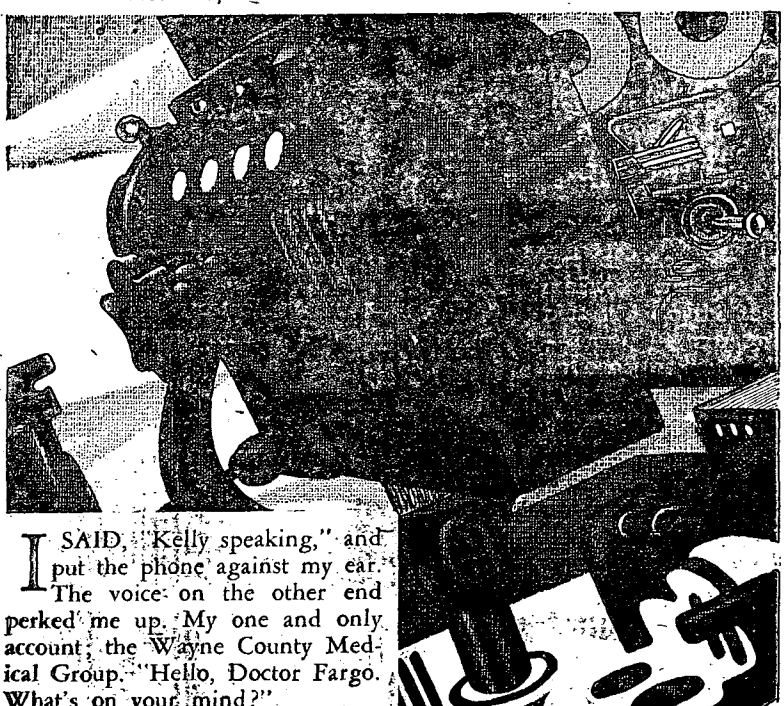
NOVELET

CURE, GUARANTEED

The medical arts, so far, have never been able to come to grips with the common cold; a sure-fire cure, just doesn't exist. So, what could be the objection to a man who used a process which guaranteed cold-cures?

BY T. L. SHERRED

illustrated by KELLY FREAS



I SAID, "Kelly speaking," and put the phone against my ear. The voice on the other end perked me up. My one and only account, the Wayne County Medical Group. "Hello, Doctor Fargo. What's on your mind?"

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Fargo was a pretty good boy, and a pretty good doctor. Of course, he had his own practice, together with his job as recording and corresponding secretary for the Group, and the added activity was apt to make him a little snappish at times. But I liked him.

"Bob," he said, "I sent you a letter last night. Got it yet?"

Probably under the bills. Yes, I had it.

"Good. Open it while I'm here," and I tucked the phone between my shoulder and my ear.

"I got it, Doc. What's— I see it. The usual?"

He said yes, and after a few remarks about the weather he went back to his work and I to mine. In this case, my work consisted of reading the throwaway advertisement from someone's front porch. It was about the usual run of the ads the Group paid me a too-small retainer for checking.

DO YOU HAVE A COLD?

No claims, no red tape, no promises, no ifs, ands, or buts. For five dollars we'll cure you cold—not in two weeks, but right NOW! No appointment needed. Results, or your money refunded. And

We
guarantee
RESULTS!

It gave an address on Harper near Chandler Park, close to where I live. That I liked, as I was getting tired of wearing overalls, or work clothes, to check some medical monster. Some of these fake cures I'd investigated in the past had been in some rough sections of town; and downriver in Delray, in the Hungarian section; or near Joseph Campau, where the Polish come big and rough. There, you don't do any investigating while you're wearing a collar and tie—not if you want to get any results. I read the ad again, and called my wife.

She was out ironing when I called, and she started right off with the old denunciation of my wearing too many white shirts, and why couldn't I wear colored shirts? At least around the office.

"Got no time for ironing," I told her. "What are you doing tonight, babe?"

"Wondering what will go good with macaroni and cheese," she said. "Why?"

"Thought you might like to furnish a little smoke screen. Doc Fargo just called, and the place is right around the corner from us."

It wasn't the first time she'd gone along with me on one of my calls. A woman—if she's been married long enough to look married, and my wife has—is always good for the domestic touch that has helped me nab some quacks

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that sold some very expensive cancer "cures" for instance.

She added a few things more about my white shirts, and ended up with a list of things she had to have to cook macaroni and cheese, although she already had the macaroni and I knew the icebox was full, as it always is, of Pinconning cheese.

The dinner was as good as it usually is, and we headed for the address given in the Free Press ad. I was right—it was only four blocks from where I live, right across from the supermarket. I parked around the corner, and walked around the block before I checked the ad again. We couldn't see any suspicious activity, and didn't expect to; but I'd learned by experience that there were times when the front door of some quack was an amazingly long distance from the back door.

THE ADDRESS was in what had used to be a dental clinic, before the dentist had made enough money on pulls and plates to build himself a new ranchtype office out in Harper Woods, where you get the wealthy trade. I had known the building was vacant, but I also hadn't known there was a new occupant, nor what kind. My wife went in first, and I went over to the drugstore for cigarettes. When I went into the building, I'd be alone, and my wife would be a stranger to me while we got the quack's song and dance. Then we could compare notes later.

There wasn't anyone in the office when I opened the door except my wife and a very professional-looking receptionist who raised her head when I came in and motioned politely for me to wait while she took care of the waiting woman—my wife—who, in turn, gave me a careless appraisal. It was only a five minute wait, or less, before the receptionist took my wife away and came back to me.

"Hello," I said. "Business a little slow right now?"

She agreed that it was: "Today is the first day we've been open. You saw our ad?" and she reached for a notebook.

"Yes, I saw the ad. I've been wondering what was going to go into this building for some time, ever since the dentist moved out. I live right around the corner, you know." It never hurts to let them think you're just a neighborhood sucker.

"That's nice. Your name, please? And address?"

"Robert Kelly," I said. "Without an E," and I gave her the address of another Robert Kelly that was listed in our last available city directory as a factory worker. She wrote that down.

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"And you have a cold, Mr. Kelly?"

I hesitated. "Well, I think so. My head is stopped up, and my nose is running..." That time of the year in Detroit, everyone has a cold except the hypochondriacs and the wealthy; they call their colds "sinus trouble".

The receptionist looked up from her notebook. "The only thing we attempt to handle here, Mr. Kelly, is a cold. We give no other treatments of any kind. If you have more than a cold, or if you think your symptoms are of something else, you had best consult your doctor at once."

I wasn't surprised. These places work on a basis of customer's confidence. You see we're interested only in your health, your well-being? See what nice people we are?

So I agreed that I had nothing else the matter with me, that I just had a cold. That seemed to satisfy the receptionist.

"All right, Mr. Kelly. If you have a cold, we'll take care of it for you. If you feel no better late this evening, or tomorrow, then drop back here and pick up your refund. That will be five dollars, Mr. Kelly," and she went to ask me some questions I hadn't expected. I answered them, and was ushered into the next room, the undressing room. The whole thing took about five minutes—a quick way to earn five dollars—and I walked out. I knew I'd find my wife waiting near the car, and we had to get home to compare notes.

She had the motor running, I got in, and we stopped for a beer before we went home. When she had the cheese and crackers on the coffee table, I got out my forms and started through the questioning routine.

AROUND a mouthful of Gorgonzola—that doesn't seem to have the bitter taste of bleu cheese—she said, "Well, she wanted the name and address. I gave her a good one. Then she wanted to know if I was certain I had a cold—as if anyone could see my red nose and not know it—and she told me about the guarantee—"

I shut her off there. No point in duplicating effort.

She went on. "Then she asked me if I'd ever had a skull operation, or if I'd ever had a severe accident involving head injuries."

"That she asked me, too," I said. "Can't figure that out. We'll come back to that later. Did she say anything about your teeth?"

My wife smiled. She has a perfect set, and she knows it. "She was quite emphatic about that, and I don't think she believed me when I told her I'd never had a filling. She said that if I'd had one, and if I'd forgotten it, I'd probably get a

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toothache. But the toothache wouldn't last, and not to get too worried about it. What did she tell you about your teeth?"

That's sort of a standing joke between us. "Nothing. She asked about them and was quite surprised when I told her I had both upper and lower plates. She wanted me to take them out and leave them in the undressing room before I got the treatment, so I did. Now, anything else, or did you . . ."

My wife said there was nothing else. "She took me into the next room and I took all my clothes off. She left me a sheet or something, and I went into another room—"

I asked her to describe the room, and she did. Apparently it wasn't the same one I'd been in, but almost the same. At least the quack had separate rooms for men and women. Some of these specialists don't even bother.

"Then what?"

"Well," and she bit her lip. "This long room—it must run the width of the building after you take off the reception office and the dressing rooms—has got a bench at one end. Right on the floor alongside the bench is painted a big red X. When I decided I was ready I put the sheet on the bench and stood on the X. There's a button set into the floor, and I pressed it."

The same as mine. "Then you pressed the button."

"And a big set of lights came on, mostly white, but all colors, and there was a buzzing in my head."

I sat up straight. "Not for me. What do you mean by a buzzing?" and I started to take more notes.

She didn't know. "Just a buzzing. My nose itched a little, I think, but then it always does when I have a cold. And I don't know if I really heard a buzzing from somewhere in the room, or if the noise was in my head."

I HADN'T heard any buzzing, or any other noise. I'd just stood there, stark-naked, feeling silly, and watched the gaudy lights flash. If I ever got another treatment I'd make sure I had something that would dim the glare enough so that I could see what was going on. My wife was still talking, and I spread some Gorgonzola on a few crackers for her. It isn't everyone's wife that knows her husband's job well enough to not mind doing a strip-tease if the job calls for it. But my wife is a remarkable woman, which is not why we got married.

She said, "Then when the lights went off I got dressed and left. I just sat in the car and waited for

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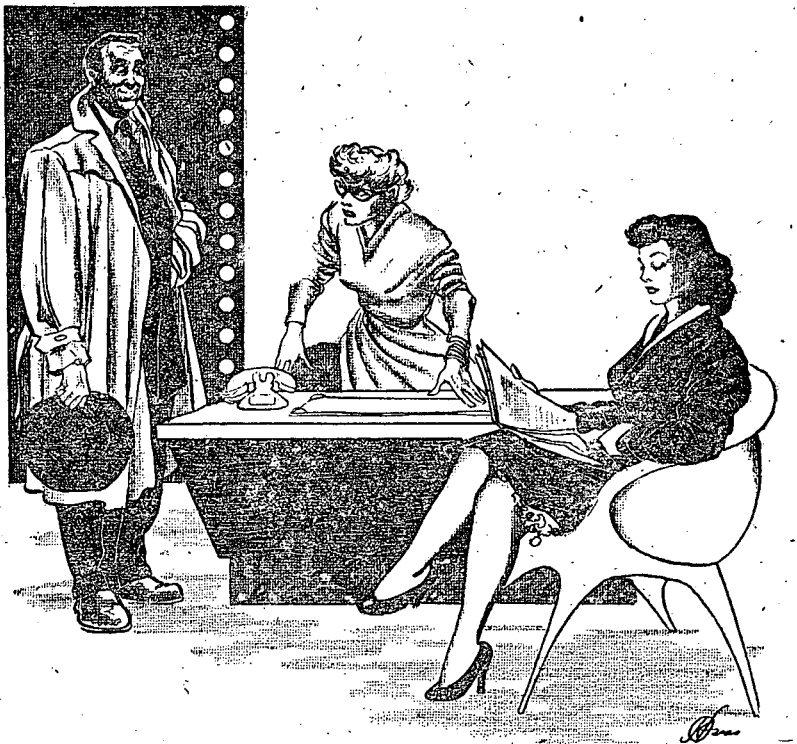

one husband who doesn't mind hiding behind his wife's skirts."

I just grinned at her. We'd been through all that many times before. "I like both the hiding, the hide, and the skirts. Got enough crackers?"

She had enough crackers, but not enough beer, so I got her another bottle. We drank the beer while she sewed up a few socks that needed it, and I filled out the rest of the report to Doc Fargo. We got to bed about eleven, and she asked me if I had finished the report.

"Just about," I told her. "Unless I think of something more by morning."

She looked up from the hand-mirror she was using, with a bobbypin between her teeth. "If I were

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you I wouldn't seal the envelope until you add one more thing."

I couldn't think of anything I'd missed, but she mentioned it and I had to ask.

She dropped the mirror in the drawer and moved the ashtray to the dresser. "You might tell your friend Doctor Fargo that I haven't got a cold any more," and she clicked off the light.

II

THE NEXT morning, instead of dropping into the mail the report for Doc Fargo I decided to stop in to see the old boy myself. Although he's not an old boy—I just think of him that way.

He has two offices on the ninth floor of the Farwell Building; one with his name on the door and one down the hall with the Wayne County Medical Group caduceus on the frosted glass. As corresponding and recording secretary, he has a full time girl in the Group office, who is supposed to work exclusively for the Society. But she can always be trusted to write some of Fargo's letters, or send out some duns, or whatnot. Doc Fargo doesn't know I know that.

I walked into the Group's office and asked for Fargo.

Miss Koppens looked at her watch. "He should be in by now," and she reached under the desk for the buzzer that went off in his office three doors away. She gave the ring that meant "Kelly's here," I suppose, because in the middle of the next cigarette Doctor Fargo came bustling in the back way. He's a funny little guy for an eye, ear, nose and throat specialist; looks like a bricklayer, or a bartender. But he's good, no mistake about that. Beside having his own practice, which is devoted almost exclusively to consultation, he held down the Group job and still found time to write occasionally for the various medical journals and bowl twice a week at the Chandler Lanes. That's where I'd met him, four years before.

"What's up, Bob?" and I got up to shake hands. "Anything serious enough to call for immediate surgery? Didn't expect to see you so soon. Anything out of the ordinary in the duck department?"

He calls it the duck department; I call it the quack section. I suppose it's because, being a medical man, Fargo is afraid to even think of the word "quack". The cost of lawsuits can run mighty high, especially between friends.

"The duck department is still very vocal," I told him. "But nothing very serious. I just had an extra few minutes, and thought I'd drop this report off to you

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personally instead of putting it in the mail," and I handed it to him, neatly folded.

Without batting an eye he said, "Kelly, you lie. You're too lazy to walk two blocks from your office to mine without having some motive. And I know just what you're thinking of—I should be a psychiatrist. Man, you're as easy to read as the Police Gazette. What's in your report that you think is so all-fired important it can't wait for the mails?" and he sat on the corner of the desk while he skimmed it. His office girl had to fold up the Movie Madness she had been trying to conceal in the half-opened desk drawer.

THE DOC read the report, folded the two pages back together, and slapped them happily across his knee. "Crazy as a bedbug," he chortled. "They never learn, do they, Bob? Now, what's on your mind that brought you up here?" Out of sight of his office girl he rubbed two meaningful fingers together, and watched my reaction. I shook my head.

"Sure you don't—if you need any, you know. . ."

"Thanks, anyway." He'd helped me several times with getting my retainer checks through the Group red tape. "Maybe later. Right now I'm in the chips."

He was pleasantly surprised. "The detection racket must be all right, Bob."

"Not half as good as writing forty-cent prescriptions for ten dollars," and we both laughed at that. "No, Doc,"—and he hates to be called Doc—"I just didn't fill out all the report. Thought I'd better give you the rest personally."

He cocked an eyebrow at his office girl.

"Don't be silly, Doc; she's heard lots worse than you and I will ever tell. No, this is a message from my wife, almost verbatim. She says to tell you that she caught her winter cold day before yesterday; last night, when we went to bed, the cold was gone. And you were to take it for what it's worth."

His ears perked up. "She caught the cold day before yesterday?" I nodded. "And she lost it last night?"

"That's right. Somewhere between our unknown friend and the time we got to bed. Nose stopped running, no nothing. No cold."

"Phooey!" Doc Fargo was disgusted with me and my wife. "You should know better than that. You never got rid of a cold that fast, and you know it. It takes—"

I finished it for him. "Two weeks if you get a doctor, fourteen days if you don't. Yeah, I know. I'm just telling you she had a terrific head cold when we walked into that place, and three

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hours later her head was as clear as a bell."

Fargo turned that over in his mind. He doesn't believe in pixies, but he does believe in me, and my wife. You don't work for a man three years without getting to know a lot about him.

"You're sure, Bob? Absolutely sure?"

I was sure.

"All right, then. Boils down to faulty diagnosis, most likely. Wasn't a cold in the first place—don't interrupt me—had she been taking anything like—say, rhinitis tablets during the day? Or any other pills, tablets, or—"

"Nor no capsules, shots, charms, or incantations. We've had too many colds not to know that nothing does any good; we also don't go to doctors for carbuncles, or cold sores." I stood up. "Look, Doc, this is no gag. She had a cold when she walked in, and to all practical purposes, when she walked out she had none. Now, you and I know that quack"—and he winced—"had nothing to do with it; there's some other explanation. But you're the doctor, not me. You tell me where the cold went, and I'll go back to work. Now, what do you want to do?"

There wasn't much he could do, and we both knew it. Just getting a lineup on how a quack operates was just the first, the easiest part of my job. It was up to Doc Fargo, as representative of the medical profession personified in the Wayne County Medical Group, to make the decisions as to what information to gather. Or to even think about gathering. Afterwards, of course, we turned over everything we knew to the Detroit police. Everyone was happy—the doctors, because another quack was out of business and some future life might be saved; the Detroit police would have their work all done for them, or most of it, and the Prosecuting Attorney would bestow accolades thereof; and I would get paid for working.

So Doc Fargo thought it over. "Bob," he said, "what happened to your cold?"

"I never had one. But I'm about due, with the wind coming from Siberia the way it is."

"When you get your cold, you come in here for smears and what-not. The next cold your family gets is going to be well-authenticated from this end. Then we'll see if we can get you, in the meantime, some really good Detroit colds for your wife to take in, as a satisfied customer. You better figure on getting a good layout on this; I think we might have something we can get our teeth into in a few days."

I indicated his office girl, who was studiously going through her

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desk and pretending to be busy. "How about Miss Koppens here. Has she got a cold, or is that box of tissues there for ornament?"

Miss Koppens looked up, and for the first time I got a close look at her. Red nose, cheeks and nose irritated from the constant use of tissues...she had a cold, all right.

"How about it, Doc?"

HE DIDN'T like the idea. We'd used Miss Koppens before, as she happened to be a rather adventurous girl who got bored of office life and thought detectives led exciting lives. But every time in the past we'd used her she'd had to go into court to testify. My wife and I—well, that was part of my job. But every time Miss Koppens went into court Doc Fargo lost her services until the case was over. And do some of these quacks, when the Law catches up with them, like to stall for continuances! Miss Koppens was too good a stenographer, the Doc knew, to spend what might be weeks in court. But he was a good sport; he must have known I wanted to get this cleared up in a hurry.

"We'll leave that up to Miss Koppens. Is your work all caught up? Would you like to work again with Mr. Kelly?"

You bet she would; she said so.

"All right, talk to Mr. Kelly and see what he wants you to do. Bob, she's all yours. Let me know what comes out, and by morning I'll have some kosher colds for you. Call me before you come over."

I stopped him as he was going out the door. "How about her cold?" Pointing to Koppens. "Is that a cold or isn't it? Better..."

He went back and tilted her face up to the light. A few questions, and, "That's a cold, all right. Normal drainages."

"So? That's what my wife had. Are you going to take samples, or whatever you do?"

"Oh, all right, Bob," grudgingly. "Shouldn't take too long. I'll have her call you when she's free; step into the office, Miss Koppens."

I called after them as they went out the back entrance. "Give her the pills that cost ten dollars—they work almost as good as the ten cent ones," and beat it before Doc could think of an answer.

THE REST of the day I spent pulling a few strings around town. I found the full name of the—well, I didn't like to call it a "clinic", but I suppose that's as good a name as any. I can't think of a better one—was Cold, Inc. It was a stock corporation, incorporated under the laws of the

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State of Michigan, whatever they might be. I'm no lawyer. In my business you don't have to know very much about anything; it's who you know.

The sole owner of the stock was one Martin Gosney. Gosney had a two-year lease on the building, had paid cash for six months rent in advance. The bank owning the property, when I pressed them, admitted that they didn't know whether Gosney was a dentist or a doctor. Gosney hadn't said, and they hadn't come right out and asked... "Who else would want to rent a building that had been built expressly for professional men?" I gave that up.

He'd had a building permit for minor alterations. The city inspector had checked the job for progress and completion, and had seen nothing beyond relocation of a few temporary wall partitions. The master electrician had rewired the rear of the building for 220-volts. He hadn't seen any 220 equipment around; he hadn't looked.

There was no Gosney listed in any of the medical or professional directories. He was neither doctor, lawyer, no dentist. I pondered that, and went over the osteopaths, chiropractors, and Christian Science practitioners. No Gosney.

Gosney, according to the bank, had paid for all building alterations and left a cash bond against his written promise to restore the building upon lease expiration, if not renewed.

The employment list showed no registered nurse at the address of Cold, Inc.

And that was all. I knocked off early and went home to wait for Miss Koppens to call. She did, and I made arrangements for her to meet at my house for dinner. That way I got out of drying dishes.

Miss Koppens and my wife went into Cold, Inc., together, and a few minutes later I drifted in.

My wife was giving the receptionist a fluttery sales talk about Miss Koppens being a personal friend of hers, and since the previous day's treatment had worked so well, and since Miss Koppens' cold was so bad, and since Miss Koppens was such an old friend of hers... I stood there and acted like a stranger.

After Miss Koppens—her name, so help me, is Wilhelmina—had been ushered away into the "treatment" room, my wife sat down to read the magazines, and didn't like it when I gave her legs my best leer. Neither did the receptionist.

"Yes?" she said, with a glance of sympathy at my wife.

"My name's Kelly," I told her. "I was here yesterday, but I still have my cold. I want my five dollars back."

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She went back to my name in her notebook and made a red checkmark opposite my name. The five dollars she took out of the drawer and handed it to me.

"There you are, Mr. Kelly. It's too bad we didn't help you. But our results are guaranteed; if we don't cure your cold you get your money back."

I thanked her, and put the five away.

"One more thing," she added. "If you have the symptoms of a cold, or if you feel generally run down like a cold is apt to make you feel, if I were you I'd see my doctor right away for a general checkup. You never know when such things might be extremely serious, if you don't catch them in time."

I knew that. I also knew a come-on when I heard it. I grabbed the bait. "That's just what I was thinking," I said solemnly. "That's what I need; a general checkup. I'd like to have the doctor look me over right now. Or if he's too busy, I could make an appointment for later. Maybe tomorrow?"

She surprised me. She said, "We don't have facilities for that here. I'd suggest you go to your own family doctor."

I kept on trying. "I don't have a family doctor. Your boss, since I got my money back, seems like he's all right. I don't trust most doctors. How about Doctor—and I don't even know his name—looking me over?"

Those big innocent eyes made me feel awfully silly when she told me, "We don't have facilities for anything like that here. We just cure colds, and we certainly couldn't recommend any doctor; I don't think that would be fair to your own doctor."

Once more, "Well, could you let me talk to the Doctor here? I feel sure—"

She pulled the rug right out from under me. "I'm very sorry, Mr. Kelly; I said nothing about the doctor here. This is not a clinic. This is Cold, Inc. My boss' name is Gosney, M. G. Gosney, and he told me that when someone like you asked those questions to give them the answers you got. And there is someone waiting right behind you, Mr. Kelly; will you excuse me, please?"

My height, when I walked out of there, could have passed under a gartersnake. My wife had heard all the conversation, and she was laughing when she and Wilhelmina Koppens met me later. Koppens likes ginger ale, so we put in a non-alcoholic evening comparing notes. I guess I wasn't too surprised when the Koppens nose stopped running about ten-thirty. They say you can't get a hangover with ginger ale. They are very wrong.

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III

DOCTOR FARGO and I spent an uncomfortable morning. He looked at Wilhelmina Koppens and we looked over all the information I'd gathered and we looked at each other.

"Bob," he said, "just what's going on here?"

"Doc," I told him, and I meant it, "you know as much as I do. My wife had a cold, and she got it cured; your own office girl had a cold and that's gone. You tell me what I'm looking for, and I'll find it for you."

Doctor Fargo took another look at Miss Koppens.

She shrugged. "It's gone, Doctor. Just like I never had a cold. My nose is still red, though," she added brightly, "if that helps you."

It didn't help, and the three of us sat down to go a little deeper into the ramifications of Cold, Inc. The "treatment" had been the same for myself, my wife, and the office girl. The exceptions had been that I hadn't heard the buzzing in my head the other two had heard, and Wilhelmina Koppens had had a toothache when she'd gotten out. As the receptionist had predicted, the toothache had been slight, and had gone away almost in minutes. Did that mean anything? We didn't know. Had Koppens any fillings in her teeth? Three, if that meant anything to us.

A half hour later we had learned nothing we hadn't known the day before, and when the rehashing ran down I told Doctor Fargo there didn't seem to be much point in more talking.

"What do you suggest?" he asked. "This Gosney is a crook, if ever I heard of one."

"With the exception," I put in, "of refunding your money if you're not satisfied. Funny kind of crook."

Doc didn't like that. "He's still a crook," he insisted stubbornly; "I can smell it."

"Well, you're not going to get much satisfaction if you put my wife or Miss Koppens on the witness stand. Or me, either. You know what I'd do if I were you, Doc?"

He didn't know. What would I do?

"Get on the phone. Talk to this Gosney. Tell him who you are, and what you want. Anyone sharp enough to supply his girl with the answers I got last night ought to be smart enough to cook up a good story for you. What have we got to lose?"

Nothing. We agreed we had nothing to lose, now that the element of surprise had been lost by my fumbling, although Fargo was

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nice enough not to put it in quite that way.

We chased Miss Koppens into the next office and put her and her shorthand notebook on one of the extensions. Cold, Inc., being so new, was not listed in the directory, but one of my strings into the telephone company got me the unlisted number. While Doc Fargo dialed I sat across the room, listening on the other extension.

I recognized the receptionist's voice. "Cold, Incorporated. Miss Hansen speaking."

Fargo winked at me. "May I speak to Doctor Gosney?"

"I'm sorry," Miss Hansen said. "Mr. Gosney is not a doctor. And he's very busy right now; may I tell him who's calling?"

Doc hesitated. "This is Doctor Neal Fargo calling, of the Wayne County Medical Group. I'd like to—"

Miss Hansen cut in smoothly. "Of course, Doctor Fargo. If you'll wait just a moment I'll see if Mr. Gosney is free," and the Doc and I eyed each other for a long moment.

Then, "Gosney speaking. How are you, Doctor?"

GOSNEY'S voice was brisk and yet soft; clear, with a touch of an Eastern accent.

"This is Neal Fargo, of the Wayne County Medical Group."

"Oh, yes," Gosney was a bit amused, I think. "You've been reading my advertisements, I trust. And you want to know by what right, and so on. Is that it?"

Fargo tried to bluff, and got nowhere. Words slid off Gosney's back.

"Terribly sorry, Doctor, that I've offended you; the offense should go the other way. The newspapers, you know, wouldn't accept my advertisement, and I was forced to have printed what the real newspapers would call throwaways. Much more expensive, and less effective."

Fargo shot me a dirty look, and

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I gave it right back. He had wanted to do the talking. Not that I could have done any better.

Gosney kept right on talking, not annoyed, not angry; a little superior. "Doctor Fargo, I think you have no grounds for resentment. On the other hand, I can understand your wistful approach to truth. Is not part of your antagonism based on the fact that your evidently thorough medical education did not teach you to cure the common cold?"

No one would print what Fargo said then. He's proud of his job.

"That was crude of me, Doctor. But you *did* cast the first stone. Suppose you come out to Cold, Incorporated, and I'll explain myself more thoroughly. Give a different name, if you like, if you don't want it known that a medical doctor would be seen here. I shall be here all the rest of the morning and afternoon."

It ended up with Fargo bellowing that wherever he went would be under his own name and his own power, and that he'd be out to Cold, Inc. a lot sooner than was good for one Gosney. I saw him start to bang down the telephone receiver and got it away from my ear just in time. Wilhelmina Koppens, in the next room, didn't get that warning, and when Fargo and I were going out the door she showed up in the doorway wearing a dangling stenographer's notebook and a hurt look.

Cold, Inc. was doing a good business. There was a line of sniffling people standing there in the brisk wind blowing across from Chandler Park, and they all stood there turning their backs to the cold, shuffling from one foot to the other like dancing bears on a hot steel plate. Fargo and I bulled our way to the head of the line, getting furious glares and leaving behind us a trail of angry mumbles. I can't say I blamed them; if there's anyone that gets me

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mad it's the one who will not stay in line and take his chances with the rest. But Fargo and I were on business.

The receptionist, Miss Hansen, was annoyed when we pushed our way through the door. She liked it even less when she saw my face. "Mr. Kelly," she snapped, "there are quite a few ahead of you. Will you please take your place at the end of the line?"

Fargo tossed his business card on the desk in front of her. "Tell Gosney I'm here. And not for a treatment, either!"

Miss Hansen took the card off her desk, sniffed at both of us, and went backstage. While she was gone I counted the waiting crowd in the office. Twenty-six crowded into a reception office built for ten; business certainly had improved in two days. Another girl in the traditional nurse's-white came out from the back and led away two of the waiting mob. Fargo and I mentally calculated the five dollar bills Gosney would get out of just this one batch.

MISS HANSEN came back, looking pleased with herself. She said, "The first door to your left. Mr. Gosney will see you immediately." As an afterthought, "He says that Mr. Kelly may come along with you, if he has any more questions he'd like to ask," and she went back to her work.

I felt my face get red under her cool contempt, but I trailed Fargo to the first door on the left, into what looked like any businessman's office, anywhere. The man behind the desk stood up and said: "Mr. Kelly? Doctor Fargo? My name is Gosney."

He didn't look like the quacks I'd been dealing with for the past two years. He looked like a real estate dealer, or a car salesman.

Medium tall, sandy hair and complexion, neatly turned out in all respects, and a big smile on his face.

He insisted we should take off our coats, and hung them up himself. "Sit down, gentlemen. Smoke, if you like."

We sat down; there wasn't much else we could do. Gosney was determined to be pleasant, and it was too early to lose our tempers.

Gosney said, "I imagine you have a few questions to ask, Doctor; go right ahead and ask them. I assure you that you will get an honest and accurate answer, and I think we'll get through this in a fashion easier for all concerned if you'll believe that."

Fargo threw the first question, the important one. "Have you a degree in medicine? Have you had any medical training whatsoever?"

Gosney shook his head. "All I know about medicine, Doctor, is what I read in the daily papers.

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No, I have no M. D. after my name. I thought that was understood."

"Then," Fargo snarled, "where did you get the idea you could practice medicine without a license?"

Gosney liked that question, and showed it. "Doctor Fargo, I'll answer that question, or any other question, with utter truth. No doctor of medicine, nor no doctor of anything else, can cure what is known as the common cold. Since colds can't be cured by doctors, or by medicine, I don't see where I'm practicing medicine, or doing a doctor's work, when I contract to cure the common cold."

Doctor Fargo said something about a jury not seeing things that way.

"Perhaps," and Gosney shrugged. "Nevertheless, I feel that when I do something doctors have failed to do, I am not encroaching on either their physical or financial territory."

That was the wrong thing to say to Fargo. He knows, in his job, about the few doctors that are interested more in finances than in healing, but he isn't that kind of doctor. Indeed, his job in the Society is partly devoted to getting rid of those few.

I saw that if a little oil wasn't poured on the waters there was going to be a big argument. Fargo is apt to be a little peppery, and I thought it would be a good time for me to take over. "Mr. Gosney," I asked, "suppose you let me ask a few questions. Granted that you can cure a cold—"

He cut me off. "Do you grant that yourself?" he leaned over the desk toward us. "Are you convinced that I really can cure a cold?"

"I'm convinced you can." Fargo shook his head violently, and I went on. "Doctor Fargo's not sold, but I am; you cured my wife, and you cured Doctor Fargo's office girl. The people standing in line outside must have heard that you can, or you'd have no lineup. So, for the sake of argument, let's say you can cure the common cold. Okay?"

Gosney was satisfied. "Exactly. Now, you said you had a question?"

"More than one," I told him. "Let's start at the beginning. How do you do it, and where did you learn, if you don't know anything about medicine?"

IV

GOSNEY waved away what he didn't know about medicine. "Let's forget about that. But I'm perfectly willing to tell you how I do it. Would you like to know, Doctor Fargo, inasmuch as it will certainly be

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part of your treatment in the near or distant future?"

That hit Fargo hard. Here was a quack telling the great Doctor Fargo, for all practical purposes, that he didn't know what he was talking about; that he—Fargo—was going to take lessons from the quack. But he stood up to it.

"I'll be using what you call a treatment? Fah! Go ahead—you're doing the talking."

Martin Gosney smiled. "Your ego—but that's not fair of me, Doctor. You listen, and be the judge." He leaned back in his chair and started to talk.

"My name is Martin Gosney. You will not find it in any medical register; you will, on the other hand, find that name in the roll of accredited aeronautical engineers. Yes, Doctor, I said aeronautical engineers. For the past fifteen years I have been employed by the Bell Aircraft Corporation, in Buffalo, New York. You might check there, if you like; they were quite disappointed when I left to go in business for myself.

"As to the cure for the common cold that I discovered and developed, I—oh, yes, it *is* a cure, Doctor Fargo. Whether or not you like it, or are prepared to face it, it is still a complete cure. You'll have ample time and opportunity for proof. Now, where was I?"

I reminded him he was talking about the cure.

"Oh, yes. Well, what do either of you gentlemen know about ultrasonics?"

Not my line. Not Fargo's, either. We shook our heads, and Gosney went ahead. "Have either of you seen these dog whistles you can't hear, but that the dog can?"

Yes, we'd seen them. I'd had one, until my dog got run over by a beer truck.

"That, gentlemen, is a rudimentary application of ultrasonics. The vibrations are too short for the human ear to grasp. There are many other ultrasonic phenomena too numerous to mention, and I will indicate only a few. In your work, Doctor, are you familiar with the temporary deafness that may come with—shall we say—working with vibrations beyond the normal range? Jet engine specialists, or mechanics working in range of the jets?"

Now, that I hadn't known. But Fargo did. After all, he was an eye, ear, nose and throat specialist; he would keep up with all that had to do with hearing, as part of his job.

"What has that to do—"

GOSNEY overrode the doctor. "Deafness caused by ultrasonics is probably not up your alley, Mr. Kelly, but you might have heard of some of the other applications of sounds inaudible to the human ear. I might quote the

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Swiss-made washing machine that washes clothes clean without soap, merely by the inthrust of a vibrating rod into a tubful of water."

I'd heard of that, in the haphazard way you hear of things, or read of them.

"Good. Now, in my fifteen years at Bell Aircraft in charge of ram-jet engine development, I and all my coworkers, were daily in contact with both audible and inaudible sound, if you wish to put all ultrasonics in that roughly-defined group. It took some time for me—and the medical profession in general—to realize the definite effects of ultrasonics. You realize, of course, that since jet engines must eventually be shipped and serviced all over the world, we at Bell had to study the output of the jet engines and formalize a set of instructions for the mechanics, the repair men who must operate and maintain the engines. In other words, we had to study the effects of the ultrasonic sounds so that the repairmen would know just how close to the engines they could work, and how long, and in what area. Is that clear?"

To me, it was. I suppose everyone has heard the jets flying over, and shuddered at the roar. They tell me, curiously enough, that the pilot never hears a thing; he goes too fast.

"So," and Gosney offered us cigars; I took one, and so did Fargo, "we made an engine called the—Bell terminology—BAC 420. We went through all the labor pangs of new design and new engineering, as we always had. When we were almost ready to try for Government approval, it dawned on me that when a mechanic with a common cold spent more than a few minutes in a test cell with the BAC 420 operating under full load, he came out with his nose cleared up, with no signs of the head cold. Oh, it got to be quite the thing around Bell for someone in another department—assuming he had the colored badge that would let him in our section—to find some sort of errand that would take him into one of the BAC 420's test cells. Then he would go back to his desk and, in a few hours, throw away his box of tissues. Even the Medical department used to laugh about it.

"But, as far as I can tell, they used to class it with the hysterical spontaneous cures every doctor knows about. Me, I didn't; I thought it over for a long time, catching three colds and getting rid of them in the test cell. Finally I borrowed the company full-fidelity tape recording of the operating cell, took it home, and duplicated it in my own fashion. And it's a good thing I did—the BAC 420, two weeks later, got an engineering change order on blade design, and then another, and by

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now it's the BAC 420-2. The mechanics don't make excuses to go into the test cells any more; the BAC 420-2 sounds different, and doesn't cure colds."

Well, Fargo and I didn't know what to think, or what to say. The story—if it was one—was as logical a set of circumstances as we'd ever heard. More, probably, because all we knew about ultrasonics you could write on the head of a pin. Gosney, too, had either the ring of absolute truth in his voice, or the magnificent sincerity that is born into the larynx of a competent liar.

GOSNEY sighed gently. "That's about all there is to it. When the engineering change made the BAC 420-1 out of the BAC 420 I took the first vacation in five years. We'd been pretty busy at Bell. Then I took my tape recording—which I'd tried and found as effective for cold curing as the BAC 420 itself—and went to work. The roar, of course, of the BAC 420 was unbearable, and I didn't think I'd need it; I broke the tape recording down into sections and made a deal with a friend of mine in a company I won't mention now. But this company has centrifuges, an electron microscope, and everything I and my friend needed."

"And what was that?" from Fargo, who was interested in spite of himself.

Gosney told him. "Time to work, and no one to watch over anyone's shoulder. This friend got samples of cold drippings from *his* friends—and mine—broke them down in the centrifuge until he had the pure dynamite, and then subjected the virus to close range blasts from the tape recorder. It took both of us most of the money we had, and almost cost him his job, but we finally found the ultrasonic combination that killed the cold virus. Killed; no, that's wrong. Under the biggest magnification we could get under the electron microscope—which isn't much, considering the cold virus—we can't see a thing. The best we've been able to figure out, from an engineering standpoint and not medical, that the virus just explodes. Maybe "disintegrates" would be a better word.

"Luckily, the particular series of vibrations that kill the virus are inaudible to your ears, and mine. I couldn't afford to build a soundproofed building; and it would have a bad psychological effect, I think, particularly upon children, if they had to listen to all the thrust of a BAC 420."

I asked him about the elaborate setup in his backroom. "Why all the colored lights, and what not?"

Gosney laughed. "Stage effect.

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I'm rather sorry I installed them, but when I went into this I thought I might be able to keep the secret a while longer if no one knew exactly what I was doing."

"Now, that's an awful thing to say, or even to think," Fargo shuddered. "Selling cures over the counter like . . . butter or eggs!"

Gosney's sandy complexion crinkled into a broad smile. "I'm not so sure there's a great deal of difference. If I have malaria I go to my family doctor for a dose of quinine; the one and only sure cure. Or if I have diabetes I inject my own insulin."

Doctor Fargo sputtered and fizzed. "Why, man, that's entirely different; not the same thing at all!"

I thought that it *was* just about the same thing, and so did Gosney.

"Why not?" Gosney inquired politely. "Take malaria to the doctor and get quinine. Five dollars for an office call."

"Don't be silly!" Fargo was getting into deep water. "How do you know you *have* malaria when you go to the doctor? Would you ask for quinine if you thought you had just a high fever and chills?"

GOSNEY shrugged and smiled at me. "My own doctor would tell me I had malaria. My own avid reading would tell me that recurrence of chills and fever would mean more malaria. It wouldn't take a great deal of intelligence to go back for another dose. Now, would it, Doctor?"

Fargo tried to think of a ready answer to that.

"You misunderstand me, Doctor. When a man comes to me and tells me he has a cold I think his diagnosis is as good as any doctor's. If I cure it, it *was* a cold; if it isn't cured, it was something else. So he gets his money back and is told to see his own doctor for further treatment. Isn't that right, Mr. Kelly?"

That was right. That was what Miss Hansen, the Gosney receptionist had told me. No cure, no cold; go see my own doctor.

"One more thing, Doctor Fargo. If you treat a man, for example, for appendicitis, and it turns out he has an intestinal malformation, or if you prescribe penicillin for a cold—which doesn't work—when the man is allergic to his wife's face powder, do you return the man's money? Do you advise him to go to another doctor because your skill is not up to curing him? Do you?"

That was a good question. You bet Fargo didn't refund any money; neither did any other doctor. But the way Gosney was putting it, it sounded like Fargo was supposed to justify the medical pro-

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fession traditions. I knew what that would do to Fargo's disposition. The truth was, that Doc and I had crossed swords on the same traditions over countless glasses of beer ever since we'd first met. However, having a personal friend goodnaturedly stick a needle in you is a lot different than letting a stranger do it. Besides, Fargo and I used to have some good arguments about the worthless life of a private detective. So I wanted to change the subject back to where reason wouldn't have to fight prejudice.

"Mr. Gosney," I said, "why all these questions that your Miss Hansen asks about head operations? And how come you want to know about fillings and tooth extractions and whatnot, if all you're going to do is cure a cold?"

He beamed at me. "Very good questions, Mr. Kelly; I'm glad you asked. The structure of the human flesh is very resilient. At least, I believe that would be a good way of putting it, since I'm not a medical man. The flesh will absorb or ignore practically any amount of the ultrashort sounds I use. However, if you're familiar with the old laboratory trick of asking the unwary visitor to touch a metal rod under bombardment with ultrasonic waves, you would realize that metal-to-skin contact, to say the least, is uncomfortable.

"That is the reason we demand that all persons subject to treatment completely remove their clothes. A metal shoelace eyelet, or a garter buckle, could cause a minor burn, or certainly an uncomfortable itch. Tooth fillings are joggled if they are of metal or amalgam; they cause a very minor toothache. That I know, because I have several fillings in my own teeth.

"The skull operations—well, I don't know what would happen if some war veteran with a metal plate in his brainpan ever came in range of my equipment. I don't *think* anything serious would happen, but I *know* I don't want to experiment. Certainly he would get a headache, at the very least. Does that satisfy you, Mr. Kelly?"

IT DID SATISFY me, and yet it didn't. On the surface, Gosney was misled, perhaps, as to the techniques and ethics of the medical profession, but still a very remarkable person. If he, alone and not even a doctor, but an engineer, had licked something that all the doctors had tried to accomplish and failed... Doctor Fargo paid me a reasonable retainer to pick holes in just such men as Gosney. I had to keep trying.

"How about letting us see how this gadget of yours works?" I was curious. Anyway, I'd like to

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see what was in that treatment room without being blinded by lights.

"Certainly. And you, Doctor Fargo? I hope that you'll not let personal or business prejudice prevent you from coming along with us?" Gosney reached for the call button on his desk, and Miss Hansen popped in. Her eyes went to me, as though she expected my pockets to be full of stolen ash-trays.

"Miss Hansen, please hold up the male section for a few moments until the treatment room is clear. Mr. Kelly and Doctor Fargo would like to see things at a little closer range."

She walked out and detoured from me as far as the wall would let her. We three sat there in silence; not long, while Fargo glowered at me as though my name was Gosney. Martin Gosney himself leaned back in his chair and regarded Doc with a plainly amused look. I just sat.

Miss Hansen came back, stuck her head in the door and said, "All right, Mr. Gosney; the treatment room is clear. How long will you be? We have quite a lineup out there, you know."

We all stood up, and Gosney told her, after a glance at his watch. "Just a few minutes, unless these gentlemen see something in which they're particularly interested. I would suggest, however, that you check the number in line for the amount of time we have for the rest of the afternoon."

She nodded, and was about to close the door, when he, with a solemn side-glance at Fargo, added another deadpan sentence.

"If business stays this way, Miss Hansen, and I have no doubt that it will, you might check the employment agencies. I think that you might need more help," and Gosney led us out of his office back to the treatment room.

V

THE TREATMENT room was about forty feet long. With the full overhead lights on, it looked just like one big barn. Up on the walls, near the bench where I had dropped my sheet, were open slots covered with heavy cloths or drapes. The big red X on the floor was there, with the floor button prominent.

"Here," said Gosney, "the person stands. You note, Doctor Fargo, that I do not say 'patient'. Mr. Kelly, you have been here before, so the explanation for you will be redundant; but for Doctor Fargo it might be entertaining. These two doors, at opposite ends, Doctor, lead to the undressing rooms. We, of course, furnish paper slippers and clean cloth robes

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for each individual, like any well-regulated Turkish bath.

"The receptionist instructs the individual as to the proper procedure—and, although I don't believe they were there when you got your treatment, Mr. Kelly—there are now duplicate instructions on the walls of each undressing booth. When the persons are undressed they, for comfort and modesty, wear their cloth robes out here and stand in the area defined by the red cross on the floor. For full efficiency, each must stand in that painted section.

"The rest of the process, to save labor and supervision on our part, is automatic: the person under treatment presses the button, the misdirecting lights flash, and the ultrasonics go to work; it takes just about two seconds."

"Gosney," I said, "I still don't get the reason for all the hullabaloo with the lights and the button, and the red X on the floor. Why don't you run them in and out? With all the lineup you have waiting outside, you'd make five dollar bills just about ten times as fast."

For the first time he looked a little sheepish. "Perhaps you're right. But. . . well, any competent barber can give you a good haircut in five to eight minutes, or he's not a competent barber. But, on the other hand, you pay a dollar and a half for those few minutes work; so, to make it look good, he snips and he combs and he fiddles away doing nothing until he's been working on you for twenty or thirty minutes. You feel better, and his rice bowl, as the Chinese put it, is still unbroken.

"This," he hesitated, "is some of my own personal psychology; it may or may not be right. I do know, however, that when I used to get colds, I'd swear my life away if I could only get rid of it. When it finally did go away of its own volition, I forgot all the annoyance and the irritation—until I got the next cold. I think, and I may be wrong, that a lot of that lineup out there would be eager to pay twenty or a hundred dollars to get rid of their colds—until they got home and felt better. Without all the stage trappings he might feel that his five dollars was spent too easily. I trust you see what I mean?"

He was right. Same principle as buying on the fifth floor the same clothes sold in the bargain basement, paying fifth floor prices. It costs more, looks like more, must be better. For an aeronautical engineer, Gosney was a pretty good amateur psychologist, for my money.

FARGO LISTENED to all this without saying a word, but I knew he was impressed. "Maybe

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so," said Doc, "but I still haven't seen what makes the wheels go round. And I haven't seen any colds cured, as yet."

Gosney's eyebrows went up. "Oh, come now. Do you really think that lineup you saw outside came just from that little sheet I had dropped on the neighborhood front porches? You know I can cure colds; you just can't admit it. As far as to what makes the wheels turn. . . ."

He went over to where the big floods were set into the plaster wall. He took a set of keys from his pocket and opened a metal door about three by five feet.

"There," and he stepped back so we could see into the opened compartment. "There's the wheels. If you gentlemen were stripped of metal I'd set them spinning. However, I'm quite familiar with the minor tingles of ultrasonics. If

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you'll wait, I'll press the red button," and he strode over and stood on the red X. "Are you ready?" and when I nodded he touched his toe to the floor control.

The overhead lights went out, there was a ticking and a clicking in the compartment in which Fargo had pushed practically his whole torso, and the big floods went into action. Gosney was outlined clear and stark, and I could see his eyes close involuntarily against the glare. It took just about what Gosney had said it would; about two or three seconds, and the overhead lights came back on.

Martin Gosney came back over to us, running his tongue gingerly over his teeth. "Those three fillings can be a nuisance at times," he smiled, "particularly when I know what's coming. But the tingling goes away in minutes. Well, Mr. Kelly, Doctor Fargo?"

Doc straightened from his inspection of the compartment. "What's in there?" and he pointed. "I didn't see anything."

"Naturally," Gosney said. "Not unless you were an electrician. Those are the controls for the timing cycle of the lights and the vibrations. You've noticed those holes in the wall up there?" and he indicated the slots that we had seen, covered with the woven material. "Those are the receptacles for the ultrasonic equipment. You will note that there are several sources of inaudible sound, to ensure complete coverage of the subject. Frankly, I do not know whether the cold virus is present in any other part of the human body besides the head, but the... loudspeakers, if you want to use that word, are so arranged that the whole upper torso is bathed."

"How come," I asked curiously, "my wife heard a buzzing in her head and I didn't?"

"The best reason in the world," he smiled; "you didn't have a cold. It takes time for the vibrations to register—as close as I can come to it, about a hundredth of a second is enough to explode the virus—and the rest of the time is necessary to bring the apparatus to critical speed. The buzzing in the head occurs only when it is a true head cold; the buzzing is the only indication of the death of billions of living organisms in the limited area of the human skull." He turned to Fargo.

"Or is the cold virus a true living organism, Doctor?" Gosney blandly asked.

Fargo, sharply shooting his eyes around the treatment room, made a mistake. "Living organism?" he replied absently. "I don't know. May be living, may be crystalline, like the tobacco mosaic virus. I don't think there has been—" and

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he woke up to realize his position.

"Just what you wanted me to say, Gosney. I realize that. Never can learn to keep my mouth shut. All right, Kelly," to me; "let's go. We've seen enough."

Gosney bowed, almost Prussian-like, and quietly led us back to his office. It was an indication of the things that were rolling around in Doc's head when he made no show of resentment at Gosney helping us on with our overcoats. We said all the things you murmur at parting and started out the office door. Gosney stopped us just before we made it.

"I don't like you to leave on unfriendly terms," he pleaded. "If you'll remember what you've seen, and remember one thing more, I'll be happy. If either of you gentle- or if you wish further proof, I'll be glad to work either with you, or any medical or technical representative you care to designate. As far as I am concerned, I have only one thing to hide—and that is the formulas for the frequencies I use in my apparatus. Good afternoon, gentlemen," and he closed the door softly behind us.

Fargo went back to his office, and I to mine. It had been not a very profitable day for both of us.

I CHECKED the mail to see if there were anything worth reading except bills. There was nothing, so I called the drugstore for a ham on rye and a carton of coffee, put my feet on the desk and began to wonder just where I got off from the Gosney hayride.

I knew, and Fargo knew, and Gosney knew, and, like Alice in Wonderland, everyone knew that everyone else knew, that Gosney was practicing medicine without a license. All the pretty words and phrases that had rolled so smoothly off Gosney's lips were so much gilding of the lily—so far as Fargo and I and the Wayne County Medical Group were concerned. But I also knew one thing that Fargo, with his devotion to his profession, was apt to underestimate, or even ignore.

If Gosney, with any kind of a lawyer, ever got in front of a Michigan jury, in a Michigan climate, there would be the biggest bang ever to reverberate off the front pages of all the newspapers in the world. I knew that any jury would find him "not guilty", and I also knew the old saw about double jeopardy—let him get away with it and our job of keeping people protected from quacks—and from themselves—would be made a lot more difficult, if not completely impossible.

On the other hand, I rather liked Gosney. As far as I could tell—and I'm at the point I can

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smell a quack at ten paces—he was being completely honest about himself. I appreciated that he really could cure the common cold—and that, itself, was a neat trick that all the doctors in the world had fallen down on. Too, he didn't make the mistake of assuming that he knew anything except curing colds; I shuddered to think about what a good lawyer would do to my unwilling testimony if I admitted that Gosney's girl had advised me to see my own doctor when she'd found out that I'd not had a cold.

I called Fargo. "Doc," I said, "this is Bob Kelly. Thinking about our friend Martin Gosney?"

He was thinking about Gosney, but I didn't approve of what he was thinking. Neither did he.

"Doc, let me make a suggestion. You get together with some of your medical friends on this. Bring them up to date on what Gosney is doing, and how he's doing it. They might have some suggestions that you and I have overlooked. Okay?"

I listened to all the reasons why Fargo wasn't going to make as big a fool of himself as I.

"Nuts," I told him. "You know perfectly well that in no time at all we're going to be up to our ears in Gosney. You're just lucky that someone stuck that advertising throwaway under your windshield wiper so that you got us a head start. In a week we're going to start getting reports from general practitioners around the neighborhood, and you or I wouldn't like that—not when it's your job to pay me to run that stuff down before it gets serious."

He hadn't thought about it that way. I knew he wouldn't like the idea of some Doctor Smith or Jones calling him up to report there was a quack operating on the East Side, and what was Fargo going to do about it? So he gave in, and agreed to get together with some of his colleagues.

"Good. But, there's one thing I want you to remember," I warned him. "I don't know who you're going to talk to, but you might as well admit to yourself right now that Gosney can *really* cure a cold. You make sure you get that point understood!"

That, I had a little trouble with. Doc can be almost as bullheaded as I am; he just wouldn't admit that Gosney was the goods, although he knew it as well as I.

"Look, Doc!" I began to get impatient. "This wouldn't be important if Gosney were just the average quack. The point is, he's carrying the mail, and that's what's so blasted dangerous. Now, will you come off your white horse and talk sense? How do you expect to make anyone else in the med-

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ical profession take this seriously if you won't yourself?"

More along that line wore him down, and I actually got an admission, not for publication, that Gosney would cure colds. That lever I used to browbeat him into relaying the same admission to his fellow doctors, whoever he chose to talk to.

"Then what?" He was petulant. "I talk and you sit. What are you going to do while I gamble my reputation on a few loose tongues?"

I admitted I had an idea, so nebulous I didn't want to talk about it as yet. "I will say this, though, Doc; I'm going to make another appointment with Gosney to get in this a little deeper. And I'm going to spend some of your money on long-distance calls to Buffalo. Gosney sounded too good to be true. If I can get to the right man in Ann Arbor, I'll take a run out to the University tomorrow morning; there's a lot more I want to find out about ultrasonics."

Fargo and I parted on rather strained terms, and I put in a toll call for Public Relations, Bell Aircraft, Buffalo. Gosney had better be telling the truth. When the calls were completed, an hour later, I dropped the phone in the cradle and stared at the ceiling. Bell Aircraft had corroborated everything.

VI

THE NEXT afternoon the lineup in front of Cold, Inc. was, if anything, even longer than it had been when Fargo and I had so brashly forced ourselves to the front of the line. I had to do it again, alone this time to face the angry mutters of the waiting scores.

Miss Hansen didn't like me any better. She said, "Mr. Gosney will see you immediately. You know the way, Mr. Kelly? As you can see, we're pretty busy..." I knew the way.

Gosney was pleased and polite as ever. "Cigar, Mr. Kelly? I looked for Doctor Fargo this afternoon, as well. I trust he's not laid up with, perhaps, a cold?"

I grinned at him. "Inflammation of the ego, maybe; not a cold. I called Buffalo yesterday."

His sandy eyebrows lifted. "And they said..."

"Just what you told us yesterday. I talked to Public Relations, Plant Protection, Personnel, and Plant Medical. Personnel asked if there were any chance you'd be back to work for Bell—Public Relations wanted to know just what your invention was."

"Invention? I'm afraid—"

"I said I was a possible investor in an invention of yours, and I was checking your references."

Gosney was genuinely pleased.

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"You are ingenious, Mr. Kelly; I never would have thought of that. But that isn't why you called on me, is it?"

I agreed that it wasn't. "No, I'm after something else. You can forget Doctor Fargo for the time being—this is for my own information. How long do you figure on keeping this up?"

"This? You mean the treatments?"

I nodded.

"Why do you ask? Isn't that rather personal?"

Sure, it was personal. "I'm not here to argue with you; from the looks of things, you've got the whole medical profession by the tail on a down hill pull. You know it, and I know it."

I went on to tell him just how I had gotten into working for Fargo in the first place, and what sort of a job I was doing.

"I'll tell you the truth, Gosney. You're not the sort of quack I've been dealing with, and I'm a little over my head. If I can't get straightened out with you and Fargo, and the Wayne County Medical Group that pays us both, Fargo will get a kick in the pants and I'll lose my best—and only—account, if you want the truth. Now, Gosney, Doc Fargo knows I'm out here to see you.

"He doesn't know why, nor does he agree with me that you can really cure colds—at least officially. I'm out here to see if we can't work out something that will save you from the expense of a court trial, and that will save me my job."

Gosney looked steadily at me. "You realize, of course, that a trial in open court will be publicity in newspapers for me when I cannot buy advertising space?"

I kept quiet. Gosney knew I had thought of that.

"But, for your own personal information, Mr. Kelly, or for Doctor Fargo, I will tell you the length of time I expect to be in this business, as you put it. I have, as I mentioned yesterday, a friend whose job and laboratory equipment enabled me to find the proper combination of ultrasonics. That friend has both faith in me, and a considerable investment in my equipment and this building. He is not only a friend, but a business partner. He must be repaid, and more.

"And I, Mr. Kelly, intend to exercise my dubious rights until I can make enough money to retire permanently to some warm tropical climate, where there is none of the virus of the common cold, where I can send sizeable checks to the mail-order houses for books and the other things I shall doubtless desire. In other words, Mr. Kelly, when I can afford it I shall shake the frozen slush from my

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feet and go someplace permanently humid where I shall never do another lick of work as long as I live!"

THAT WAS all I needed to know; that was when I knew that Gosney was telling the truth. That was what provided the last few grams that tipped the balance over to Gosney. From then on, I was to be on his side. "Then what?" I asked. "What happens to your treatment?"

He spread his palms. "That's up to the doctors of the world. The day I retire—and you know, Mr. Kelly, that in the few days this building has been open I have taken in an unbelievable amount of five dollar bills!—the day I retire I will make public my frequency-formulas. Unfortunately, I suspect the doctors will never use them."

"How long do you think it will take you to make this gorgeous, indefinite sum?"

Gosney didn't know. "With taxes, it's hard to tell. The more I make, the more taxes I pay. I must hire a tax expert, or someone to figure out the intricacies of the Federal Laws. But I have estimated that a lifelong income of a few thousand dollars a year would do me very well. The capital sum to obtain that? I hadn't thought of it. Properly invested, the prime amount should not involve astronomical figures; possibly a few hundred thousand."

I ran through a few totals in my head, and calculated the number of people in line outside the building.

"Why, you'd clear that in a few years, if business keeps up!" I hadn't realized how much money he was really in line to make.

"In a good deal less than that, Mr. Kelly. That, I mention with the possibility of opening another branch or two back in Buffalo, for example, or Chicago, or New York."

Why, this Gosney was liable to corral five dollar bills faster than the mints could run them off the presses; no wonder he'd been so independent with Fargo. At that rate, he could erect facilities and make a million dollars before an amiable judge could grant an injunction against him. Fargo and I were in for plenty of trouble. All I could do was to talk to Doc and advise him of the old saying, "If you can't lick 'em, join 'em."

"You see, Mr. Kelly, I can speak frankly to you. I have no head for business, no desire to indulge in commercial chicanery. My partner and I had thought of leasing our equipment to the public; that we eliminated because of the impossibility of obtaining sufficient capital for production facili-

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ties. To be blunt, when I rented this building and installed everything, our last penny went into it. Ask for investors? Thanks; I've read too many books about the poor but proud inventor left holding the bag.

"As it is, when I pull out of here I'll be free and clear with the world. I'll have my cash; my partner will have his; and the medical profession, or whoever wants them, can have my formulas free. For that matter, any high school teacher with a rudimentary grounding in technology could, if he knew my exact frequencies, duplicate both my treatment and its effects. The public who paid for my treatments will have lost nothing, my partner and I will be satisfied, and the doctors' egos—although sadly bruised—will in time be healed by the patients coming to *them* for colds. Do we understand each other, Mr. Kelly?"

We understood each other. I knew when I relayed the message back to Fargo, or to the assembled bigwigs of the Wayne Medical Group, there was going to be a warwhoop of the ages, and I didn't think I'd appreciate it. I didn't realize how long I'd been thinking to myself until Gosney gave the polite cough that signifies boredom.

I came back to reality. "This sort of sets me back on my ear," and I hunted in my pockets for a match.

Gosney held out a battered lighter. "Quite possibly. I find it hard to realize, on the other hand, that I am so firmly and rapidly on the path to complete financial independence. I enjoy that feeling, Mr. Kelly; I enjoy it so much that I cannot allow you or Doctor Fargo to end it. I do not like friction, especially legal friction, but this time, I will fight. I think I shall turn out to be a rather formidable foe."

There wasn't anything more for us to say. He helped me on with my coat again, and I left. I sat in the car, thinking about where I was going to find another client as well-paying as the Medical Group, when Gosney's gift cigar went out again. I looked out at the snow flurries and the Cold, Inc. lineup for a long time before I heaved myself out of the front seat to the corner confectionery store for matches. I expected to get the matches in a second and be on my way. But I got talking to the little old lady that ran the confectionery store about the weather, and the people who were waiting in line for treatment. She told me one thing—and up until now I've never told anyone what she told me, nor where I got it—that took me off the hook with Fargo, and took Fargo off the

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hook with the Medical Group. It was the cheapest packages of matches I ever got, and the best carton of cigarettes I ever bought, which was the only way I could thank the little old lady for what she had told me. That was in December.

ONE WARM Friday evening the next August my wife and I were sitting lazily in our backyard. The sun was just going down behind the big gas tank at the city airport, the tiny breeze was making the leaves tinkle in time with the ice in the martini pitcher, and my wife was reading the Sunday supplement edition the paperboy brings on Fridays.

She tossed the paper in my direction and held out her glass for me to refill. "Here's another story on Gosney, and his cold cure. He's starting all over again. Says he thinks he can find a cure for yaws, whatever that is."

"Yaws," I told her while I carefully dropped an icecube in her outstretched hand, "is a very unpleasant disease. Usually found in the tropics. Where is he now, in Bali?"

She flipped the icecube at a passing butterfly. "That's right; you must have read the article." She poured her own martini. "You want another one?"

I wanted another one. "No, I haven't read the paper yet. How's little Iodine doing?"

"How did you know Gosney is in Bali, if you haven't read the paper? Has he been writing to you?"

I tasted the martini. For some queer reason I like them with sweet Vermouth, instead of dry. "Haven't heard from him since he left. As far as Bali—well, I just had me a hunch he'd be there."

My wife picked up the comics and threw them at me. "And here it is August. Have you forgotten you said you'd tell me how you got Gosney to close up shop?"

No, I hadn't forgotten. "I said I'd tell you, but I didn't say *when* I'd tell you; I haven't even told Fargo yet."

"And you won't," she said. "I know you too well. Now, how about letting your wife in on the secret?"

"Show me the marriage license and I'll tell you." I knew it was probably in the attic.

"Suit yourself," and she threatened to pour out the martini on the grass. She knew I was too lazy to get up.

"Well . . I guess it won't hurt now. Gosney is out of town, General Electric is making his equipment for lease to doctors, and the common cold is a thing of the past. Fargo got a bonus and kudos for

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making Gosney see the light; I got the bonus; and all's right in the world. Pour me another one."

She did, and I told her the whole story.

She didn't know whether to laugh or to slap me in the face.

"But why," she insisted, "did you let him stay open that long? You could have closed him the very next day!"

I HESITATED. "Well, he was basically a fairly decent sort. He told me, and I believed him, that he just wanted enough money to retire. I think he was entitled to a break—even though I could have closed him up right away. I just waited until Fargo got pushed by the Medical Group into filing suit. Gosney, of course, was ready for that; when the case was ready for trial I went to Gosney and laid my cards on the table—'close up or go to jail!' He closed up, and that was it. The case was nolle prossed. He came through just the way I knew he would; he turned over his formulas to me, I gave them to Fargo, and Doc turned them over to the National Medical Association for test. The formulas were the goods. As I said before, this is one of the few deals in written history where everyone was satisfied."

She sat there and began to blush. "You might at least—"

I laughed at her. "If you'd look in the right-hand drawer in my dresser you'd find it. It's the only one I have."

She jumped up and ran into the house. In a minute she came back with an embarrassed smile.

"I threw it in the garbage!" she said. "And that's where it belongs. Bob Kelly, I think you're terrible!"

I chuckled. "I still have the negative put away; I told you it was the only one I had of you."

She began to blush again. "What about all the others?"

"What people don't know won't hurt them. How else do you think I'd have guessed he had cameras in the women's treatment room if the little old lady hadn't told me just how much film he was buying?" I reached for the martini pitcher.

"Your picture he gave me of his own free will, although I would have demanded it anyway. Suppose you go mix up another batch while I dream about what he's doing in Bali?"

★

There's a most unusual novelet coming up in our next issue. Watch for "Dead On Departure", by Milton Lesser.

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MIRROR, MIRROR

BY JEROME BIXBY

illustrated by W. LUTON

The native custom was harmless to Earthmen and their aims for exploitation of this world. But the facts about purnya *brought a sickness to the Colonel — a sickness for which there was only one remedy, which could alleviate, but not heal.*

LIEUTENANT-COLONEL Robert B. Corcoran stood in front of the mirror in his quarters, brushing his hair. His military brushes moved through his short grey hair with the precision of two tanks strafing an occupied hill. The front-to-back

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path they followed had begun just above his left ear; now it was working its way across the crown toward the right ear.

When his scalp was tingling pleasantly he put the brushes on the dresser, examining them briefly as they passed eye-level and noting with satisfaction that few hairs clung to the scrupulously-clean bristles and that there was no slightest sign of dandruff. At sixty-seven Corcoran had all his hair. Black had long ago conceded to iron-grey—but not an inch at the temples had he lost. And greying was to be expected. Abhorred, but expected.

Now he examined his uniformed figure in the mirror, having to move back a step in order to see anything more than head and chest. He turned a little to one side, eyeing his midsection. It was—or at least looked—as flat as an athlete's. Once conscious control had been necessary for that, when the muscles had first begun to loosen; but exercise and constant pulling-in had done the trick, and the maintenance of the silhouette he desired had at last been entrusted to habit. For a man of sixty-seven it was a good figure, almost a youthful one. . . if one chose to ignore that sheathing it was a sixty-seven year old skin. This, Corcoran could—of course—do nothing about: the skin was browned from soldierly exposure and officerial sunlamping, and the muscles underneath were in fair shape, but still the skin told its story: soft, with multitudes of tiny, tiny wrinkles—no, not quite wrinkles, just infinitesimal soft crinklings about navel and pelvis and below the settling breast muscles, like a crinkle-finish on metal; and, the skin of the nipples was hardening, and the skin about the neck and collarbone was disposed to brittleness and easy discoloration.

Now Corcoran's impeccable uniform covered these tragic evidences, of course: olive-drab jacket; pearl trousers; shiny belt; polished buttons; the three Sol-bursts on each shoulder denoting his Lieutenant-Colonelship. Bob Corcoran was a tall, wide man, and had always worn the uniform of his planet well. Standing before the mirror, he went after imperfections: the belt was straightened—it had crept up slightly on the left side. A tug at the bottom of the jacket put several wrinkles to flight and made of his large chest a satisfyingly smooth and powerful-looking expanse. He touched the tie, straightened the collar insignia which told that he was attached to the Terran Occupational Forces on the planet Nurra of the double-sun Mira. Lastly he straightened his shoulders and raised his eyes.

His face. . . he had often thought

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sourly that the only fault with his uniform was that his face stuck out the top of it. You cannot conceal a face, and what it reveals.

A MASSIVE face—once it had been handsome in a hawkish sort of way. Big jaw, strong nose, a good brow, a wide mouth that seldom really smiled. Bristling brows which ten years ago had suddenly started to grow at a furious rate and which gave him, when he put his head down and looked up from beneath them, a singularly formidable appearance. Blue eyes which behind glasses were sharp, and without them were squinty.

Corcoran put out his jaw, stretching the skin under it to lessen its sagging. There was absolutely nothing he could do about the two large wrinkles that creased downward from his nose to form inverted question-marks on either side of his mouth, and the many smaller tributary wrinkles that webbed from them across cheeks and chin. If he relaxed his face, the flesh sagged. If he tightened his mouth, the wrinkles deepened. It was the same way with his forehead: if he frowned slightly to smooth its skin, the frown created other wrinkles where his brows met, and moreover brought into prominence the crinkles and crows-feet about and under his eyes.

He sighed. Keeping his jaw thrust out and his head slightly back, he put on his cap. He took a deep breath. He had a commanding appearance, he thought. An alert appearance. A commanding, alert, old appearance.

One last look, with a twist of mouth that had something of fury in it...then he turned and walked to the door of his quarters.

Outside, the vast, red, fuzzy-edged half disc of Mira was settling toward the black hills to the north. The giant sun's tiny white companion was riding high farther west, and Nurra's curious shadow effect was everywhere in evidence: where a building or a tree or a blade of grass obstructed the white light of the companion, casting a shadow, Mira's great bulk, looming above the horizon like the shoulder of a sunburned god, was able to cast its red light down into that shadow area. Thus the shadows on Nurra, when both suns were risen, were a dusky, dusty red.

The chill of oncoming evening was in the air as Corcoran went down the wooden steps that led to the walk. A breeze whipped down Avenue B-11 of the Terran camp, rustling the stiff blackish grass-like vegetation that grew between the rows of pre-fab buildings. The camp looked almost de-

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serted—but that was only because it was chow-time. Officer's mess must be about on, and Corcoran could have used a meal. But there was another hunger in him. He walked down the street, shoulders stiff, head up, casting his red shadow like blood.

IN HIS OFFICE his orderly rose and saluted. He had been arranging tomorrow's paper-work on Corcoran's desk. Corcoran snapped off a salute in return and said, "Tell Sergeant Howard to bring the prisoner over, then take chow; I won't need you until tomorrow."

The orderly departed, going off across the street toward the guardhouse a few buildings down. Corcoran racked his cap and sat down at his desk. He picked up a few papers and glanced through them disinterestedly. There was nothing that couldn't wait—things to be okayed, to be counter-signed, to be considered. Only the top paper counted tonight; he separated it from the rest and held it almost lovingly.

He waited. Through the window across the room he could see giant Mira, a little more sunken below the horizon than it had been before. From where he sat, the white companion was not visible. He leaned back in his big chair and lit a cigarette; the smoke was rosy in Mira's light. He snapped on the desklamp. Red light retreated to lurk about the walls of the room.

There were steps outside. Sergeant Howard appeared at the door. He saluted. "The prisoner, sir."

"Bring him in," Corcoran said. "Then wait outside." He jabbed the cigarette at the ashtray until it was shredded. His hand was trembling slightly.

When he looked up again the Nurran had appeared before his desk on soundless feet, white robe wrapped loosely around slender body.

"Sit down," Corcoran said, making his voice kindly. "Here, beside the desk."

The Nurran sat down.

Corcoran pretended to study the paper he held. Finally he looked up. This was an old Nurran: he had tried to go *purnya*, and only old Nurrans did that. Yet it would have been impossible to tell from the creature's appearance that he was old. The skin of his humanoid face was smooth, slightly golden-colored. The large, dark eyes were clear and sparkling, despite the fear that clouded them now. The hands folded on the robed lap were slim, tapering, smooth. The Nurran sat straight as an arrow in his chair. Unconsciously Corcoran straightened his own back. It was not as easy to sit that way

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for any length of time as it had once been.

The Earth forces had been on Nurra for a year and a half. Corcoran spoke fluent Nurran: "You were caught," he said, tapping with paper, "trying to escape your village."

The Nurran nodded.

"You know there is a maximum penalty of death for that; why did you do it?"

"I have already told you why I did it," the Nurran said softly.

"You have told others; you have not told me. I want you to tell me now. Perhaps I can help you."

The Nurran looked at Corcoran with a faint smile. He opened his hands on his lap in a little gesture.

"There may be mitigating circumstances," Corcoran said.

"I would like that to be true, but I am afraid it is not. I tried to leave my village; I was caught; that is all."

Corcoran lit another cigarette and studied the flame of the lighter a second before releasing it. "You don't seem to want to live... Why did you try to leave?"

"To go *purnya*. I have already said that; it was noted on the paper you are holding."

CORCORAN leaned back in his chair. He puffed on the cigarette, his blue eyes intent on the Nurran behind his glasses. "All right. Tell me about it; tell me about *purnya*."

"You know about *purnya*."

"I want to hear you tell it."

"Why?"

With an effort Corcoran kept his voice kindly: "Because I am an Earthman. Because there must be things I don't know about *purnya;* I have no desire to punish you too severely."

Again the faint smile, this time a little puzzled, and a shake of the head. "Forgive me, Earthman, if I doubt that your intentions are to help me. You know what *purnya* is—it is simply defined, if not so easily understood. You have specifically forbidden it, on the supposition that those of us who wander on *purnya* might take with us information of value to the resistance movement which you fear so much. You have isolated our villages and have imposed the death penalty on *purnya*. Always when you've caught one of us, he has died. It will do me no good to assure you that no one on his *purnya* is a spy—that they were not, and I am not. At any rate, the question is hardly that of your understanding *purnya* or not; I confess that I do not see why you ask me about it."

Corcoran made an impatient movement: the creature was more

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cold-bloodedly logical than most of them—and that was saying a great deal. "Aren't you willing to risk that I might be sincere? That I'm trying to help you? If you don't cooperate, I'll have no recourse but to sentence you to death as regulations require. But if you do, I might find something in your case that would bring you a lighter sentence—at least get you off alive; after all, we're not butchers, you know."

The Nurran seemed to be thinking. "No," he said after a moment. "You have taken our planet from us, and would destroy us forever as a people with a destiny of its own, simply for our mineral wealth—but it is true, you do not seem to kill without reason. Perhaps you speak truth, then... perhaps you would prefer not to—"

For the first time animation had come to the fragile golden face. Something of hope, of belief, had replaced the quiet expectation of death. Then, even as Corcoran thrilled to the sight, the hope faded: "But I do not know what I can tell you that will help me. I was caught; all who are caught, die. I knew this danger when I began my *purnya*... I simply hoped I would not be caught. Or perhaps I was unable to help myself. The need to go *purnya*, when the time comes, is a consuming, an all-excluding purpose... almost an instinct. You would not understand, Earthman."

"I might," Corcoran said; "it can't hurt you to tell me about it."

THE NURRAN said nothing. After a moment Corcoran opened his center desk drawer and brought out some small objects—a red wooden ball about an inch in diameter; an intricately-worked miniature sceptre of a reddish metal; several startlingly Earth-like books; a jar of small greenish crystals that were probably candy; a tiny telescope almost unbelievably powerful for its size. He put them on the desk.

The Nurran's eyes had widened. Corcoran waited. He had done this before—all of it. Had seen hope and despair, skepticism and longing flicker on golden faces, and played on them lovingly as if every nuance of changing expression were fuel to the bitter flame in him. Through the window he could see the vast red shoulder of Mira sinking with visible motion below the dark hills: the flame in him, he thought, must be as big and as red as that sun.

The Nurran had been sitting very still. Now he stirred, the barest rustle of robe. Watching him, Corcoran knew that the articles he'd placed on the desk—the things found in the little knapsack

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affair the Nurran had worn when they picked him up—would do the trick. Sight of his treasures, and the feeling that a chance of escape existed, would make the Nurran talk.

The Nurran stirred again in his chair. He picked up the red wooden ball; his slim fingers caressed it as he talked: "It was two nights ago that I knew my time had come to *purnya*. I knew that my death was near. Perhaps in one hundred years, two hundred, who knows? It was near—"

The paper in Corcoran's hand rustled as his fingers tightened. He sucked on his cigarette, narrowed his eyes behind the smoke. "Go on."

"Next morning I informed the Village Council that my time had

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come. A feast was held that night, as is the custom. I received gifts, which in turn I gave back to the givers, each of them receiving another's, for a man carries nothing on *purnya* but his pack containing objects symbolizing the life he has lived."

He put down the red ball and picked up one of the books, balancing it between his two hands: "When the feast was over I would commence my *purnya*. Until my death I should wander, having not, owing not, needing not. Wheresoever I might stop I should be fed and given a place to rest and, if necessary, clothed. In my last few hundred years of life only nature should know me well—the mountains and valleys and rivers and skies should be my friends.

"I should see places I had never seen before. I should visit, if time allowed, every village on the planet; and everywhere I should be welcomed and cared for and entertained. I should visit every region noted for its beauty. I should venture where none had gone before, to explore, perhaps to find something of value or interest to my people. I should adventure with no thought of injury or death, for the urge to come hard to grips with nature lies in all of us, and I must soon die, anyway. Without fears, responsibilities, needs, I should know the peace, the solitude, the beauty, the wonder of new places; where none might lay a claim on me; where all I encountered might help me on my way; where no purpose save that of living till I died might be in me. I should become pure. I should be made happy. In *purnya* a man is given the world before he dies."

THE PAPER in Corcoran's hand was a tight sweaty ball. "What would you seek?" he said harshly.

"Seek? Why . . . nothing, except to live, then die. Or in a metaphysical sense perhaps I would seek what it is I truly want: but would I have use for it if I found it? I had lived. I had worked. I had raised many families. I had—" he put down the book and picked up the tiny sceptre— "served my people, when my turn came, in governing capacities. Now death was upon me. In a few hundred short years I should die. There was left only my *purnya*—my time of wandering, of release, of communion with—"

"How old are you?" Corcoran said. His eyes behind the glasses were points of blue flame. He was trembling almost as if in eagerness. This was the moment.

"I am—" the Nurran thought a moment— "about eleven thousand years old. We do not keep careful track."

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Every muscle in Corcoran's body urged to explode in the direction of the Nurran. The bitter flame surged in him. He shivered to it; it thinned his lips to a grey line. It was an orgasm in a dream—agonizing, exquisite, useless, awful. He said in a low, hating voice, "You don't keep track. You don't keep track. Eleven thousand of your years . . . nearly thirty thousand of ours. Oh, sweet God—" his voice sank almost to a whisper—"*thirty thousand years.*"

The Nurran stared at him for a long moment with his big, dark eyes.

"Finish your story," Corcoran whispered. "Finish it. Tell it to me!"

The Nurran said softly, "The night I started on my *purnya* I was caught by your soldiers as I entered the hills; that is all." He closed his mouth. It was evident that he would say nothing more. His eyes, on Corcoran, were filled with quiet understanding.

Corcoran swept the objects on his desk back into the drawer and closed the drawer, returning the Nurran's gaze brightly and triumphantly.

The Nurran shook his head. "You have given me hope, then taken it. But I am not afraid to die. I regret only that I shall not *purnya*. It is you, not I, who are in torment—"

Corcoran said loudly, "*Howard!*"

Sergeant Howard stepped in, his proton-rifle half unslung at the abruptness of the summons.

Corcoran said, "Remove the prisoner. Tomorrow at dawn he is to be shot; you'll have the proper papers by then."

The Nurran rose from his chair. "I am sorry for you, Earthman."

ADJUTANT-COLONEL Wingate came up the wooden steps and into the office just in time to move aside for the silent-stepping Nurran and the alert Sergeant a pace behind. He watched them out the door, his thirty-five year old face a little troubled. "So that's why you didn't show up at mess."

Corcoran said with an insane calm, "Thought I'd get it over with." He looked at his hands. As he watched, their trembling stopped.

"Death sentence?"

Corcoran nodded.

"Honestly, sir, do you feel it's necessary to stand all of them to the squad? I can see how it affects you. After all, you don't *have* to give them the maximum penalty—"

"Discipline's got to be maintained." Corcoran wheeled and walked to the window, putting his back to that concerned young face. "You're too young—too damned young to understand, Wingate.

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I've been on a dozen occupied worlds. Discipline has to be kept up; you never know how trouble's going to start."

"Well, there was some talk at mess," came Wingate's voice, "about dropping the death penalty anyway. The Sociology gang is pressuring the General about it—and Intelligence seems satisfied that the *purnya* custom doesn't tie in at all with the resistance—"

"Good," said Corcoran. "Good."

Through the window he saw the last fuzzy red remnants of Mira just above the black horizon. Far to the left was the white diamond of Mira's companion, still above the hills but setting. In the window-glass Corcoran could see his face reflected in the light from both suns—red and white, every shadowed wrinkle standing out a blood red, old and afraid, eyes hidden behind glasses that were roundish gleams, stiff grey hair touched with red. Into his view moved Sergeant Howard and the Nurran, going toward the guardhouse down the street.

Corcoran watched them. Howard opened the guardhouse door. The Nurran walked gracefully through. Howard followed. At the same time the last glowing shreds of Mira vanished below the horizon, the red light faded, only the white companion remained, its pure white light burning into the window and making of Corcoran's reflected face, as he turned it to the sun, an almost young-looking thing, getting down into the wrinkles, flattening them, smoothing the sixty-seven year old skin.

Corcoran straightened his shoulders, lifted his head. Tomorrow rifles would sound—and an idiot voice in Corcoran told him that in the moment when the rifles sounded, just as in all such moments when rifles had sounded, he would not feel so helpless, so baffled, so frustrated—that on rising he might, despite his tired flesh, feel by the sum of one soul, or by the assassination of a god, not quite so hateful of the dawn.

★

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These were the strangest movies that anyone had ever seen — and they were free!

the marvelous movie

BY ROBERT ABERNATHY

illustrated by FREAS

SHERIFF SEEGER left his car at the edge of the parking-lot, not far from the highway, and, ignoring the misty drizzle and the trampled mud, advanced with purposeful strides on the floodlit building that loomed up beyond ranks of parked, wet-slick cars. His raincoat hid his badge and gunbelt, and he wasn't

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wearing his cowboy boots on account of the mud; no stranger would be apt to recognize him as a law officer.

The red neon sign glared in his face. *Free Movies,* it said simply; no more, no name even. The Sheriff grinned to himself for a moment, recalling how Jesse Hupsman had almost had apoplexy telling him about that sign. Of course Jesse's excitement was understandable—his El Dorado Theater had been the county seat's one and only, until this crazy Yankee—Bullock, his name was according to the recorder's office where he'd filed title to the land here—turned up and started showing pictures for nothing.

When the Sheriff had allowed he didn't know as there was any law against doing that, Jesse had exploded: It was against nature and bad for business; and if it wasn't illegal it ought to be. Besides—said Jesse in so many words—there would be another election one of these days... The sheriff's grin faded, and he sighed; standing under the glaring sign, he surveyed the entrance close at hand. The wildcat theater was a big, graceless, barnlike structure, built in evident haste out of raw unpainted lumber. "Might be able to get him on the fire-laws," muttered Seeger to himself.

Plainly Bullock was doing a thriving business, if you could call it that when he wasn't charging admission. In spite of the weather a sizeable crowd was funneling in—mostly young folks from El Dorado and the country round. Some of them recognized the Sheriff and nodded hello with a suddenly-furtive air; one or two looked as if they wished they hadn't come.

If fire-laws wouldn't work—after all, the place was out in the country—then there were the charges the Daughters of Decency had indignantly offered to bring. The Sheriff grimaced, remembering the half-hour he had spent with the ladies—that had been considerably worse than Jesse Hupsman's needling. Of course none of the Daughters had actually seen any of the shows, but they'd heard rumors—everybody had. The rumors were passed on with snickers by the young fellows who'd been there: some of the pictures that were showing for free were hot stuff, French movies—'French' signifying 'pornographic' in the vocabulary of El Dorado's youth.

Well, the first step was to see for himself. The sheriff pulled his hat low over his eyes and joined the moving crowd.

IN THE entranceway was a shiny turnstile that clicked, evidently counting visitors. As Seeger pushed through it, from a lensed gray box suspended by cables from a

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bare wooden joist overhead a voice said quietly, in flat mechanical tones: "Howdy, Sheriff Seeger; awful weather, ain't it?"

"Sure is," Seeger acknowledged, and then turned sharply round to stare at the hanging box.

Behind him, a Mexican cotton-picker in faded denims slipped through the turnstile. The gray box said, "Buenas tardes, Senor Valdes. Que tiempo de perros!"

The sheriff took off his damp hat and scratched his head. If his ears hadn't deceived him, and the speaker up there had really addressed him by name, somebody must have tipped off whoever was at the concealed microphone.

A glance around the lobby in which he now stood revealed nothing; the place was as bare and cheerless as a stable, barren of posters, vending-machines, and all such. At one end stairs led up to a closed door—to the projection-booth, probably. The sheriff could see no indication that the place was being used as a cover for dope-peddling, white slavery, or any other of the hideous possibilities Jesse Hupsman's fertile mind had suggested, but he told himself that he would keep his eyes open.

Over the door leading to the theater proper there was a sign: *Performance Will Begin In 7 Minutes*. The sign appeared to be simply painted on the wall, but as the sheriff looked at it the 7 winked out and a 6 appeared in its place.

"Huh," said Seeger puzzledly. He put his hat back on and pushed resolutely through the curtained inner doorway. It was pitch-dark inside, only the dimly-lighted oblong of the screen up front visible; but a light appeared bobbing along the floor in front of him, he followed it automatically and was directed to a seat near the middle. Only when he had settled his lanky frame on the folding chair that served as a seat did the sheriff realize two things: (a) he had seen, but not touched, the opaque dark curtain through which he had passed at the door, and (b) he should have seen the flashlight-carrying usher silhouetted against the screen, but he had seen nothing but the light moving before him.

He peered suspiciously round him, but could see nothing distinctly in the darkened auditorium. Then he became conscious of another queer thing: a persistent feeling that he was being watched, as if someone's eyes were literally burrowing into the back of his neck; he twisted round and could see no one immediately behind him, but the nagging sensation was so annoying that he rose and groped his way to the rearmost row of chairs, directly against the wall.

As he was sitting down, a blare of music sounded, and the screen

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lit up. The sheriff postponed worrying further about the theater's unusual features, and leaned back to enjoy the show; after all, he was getting it for nothing...wasn't he?

THE PICTURE began, disconcertingly, without title or screen credits—only a lettered notice flashed on for a few seconds: *Patrons will please refrain from violence during the performance.*

What followed was still more disconcerting. Without warning there was a knot of men fighting—ferociously, vindictively fighting, with fists, clubs, bricks, knives. The voices of the combatants as they trampled to and fro were an inchoate, animal roar that made the hackles rise. The scene was shockingly real—no Hollywood sham-battle, this; faces streamed blood, skulls were crushed, teeth knocked out, bellies ripped up; the smell of rage and blood seemed to well through the theater.

Sheriff Seeger sat forward on the edge of his seat, breathing harshly; he was instinctively aware that he was seeing something altogether exceptional in raw realism. The eye-gouging going on in the foreground just now—cripes, that *couldn't* be faked!

Over the uproar rang suddenly a clear silvery note, a bugle call, and there appeared a column of men in some kind of soldiers' or policemen's garb, advancing briskly in close order. Over their heads a banner waved, a black lion rampant on a scarlet ground. Commands were shouted, and the bugle sang again, peremptorily. The rioters—those still on their feet—swayed apart, hesitated; some turned to flee, others brandished weapons and moved belligerently to meet the oncoming troop.

Then a machine-gun began firing. Its closely-spaced reports were deafeningly sharp, and the watcher's nostrils stung with the acrid odor of burned powder. Some of the rioters collapsed—you could see the bullet holes appear in them as if by some awesomely potent magic—the rest broke and scattered, terrorized. The column of uniformed men swept on without faltering; they swung past in lockstep, and as the firing ceased the only sound was the rhythmic tramp of their marching feet. In the audience there was sporadic clapping.

The scene dissolved. The sheriff blinked and sat back again in his seat, feeling shaken and somehow abashed. There was something funny about those pictures, too; they were in strikingly natural colors and seemed practically three-dimensional, but there was something else that he couldn't put his finger on...

A NEW PICTURE formed. The interior of a cave, low-vaulted,

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sooted by many fires; firelit now by a blaze that leaped and crackled, fed with sticks and bones and dung. Outside the cave was wet black night, full of wind and the cries of hunting-beasts.

Around the fire crouched the world's first tyrannicides, planning the world's first revolution. A circle of fierce hairy men, clad in small animals' skins sewn together, muttering together in low cautious voices, eyes glittering with uneasy glances at the outer darkness, as they plotted to destroy the striped lord of the Earth. Their women watched them fearfully from the shadows as they argued and gesticulated, drawing diagrams with a charred stick on flat stones.

Outside the circle a young man rose silently to his feet and slipped away. From a crevice of the rocks near the cave mouth he took his stone ax and his bone-pointed spear, and, unnoticed, melted into the darkness.

The wind whipped wild branches against his face, thorns plucked at his skin garments, small animals fled rustling and squeaking from before his feet; and other sounds came to his ears—the raucous screaming of night-fowl high up in the trees, the grunting and wallowing of some huge creature on the banks of the unseen river, and, from afar off, in and under the medley of night-noises, the deep coughing voice of the tiger.

The youth hesitated, his face working, knuckles white on the shaft of his spear. Biting his lips, he pushed ahead, trying to make his movements silent despite the undergrowth. Somewhere he had missed the path. The wet wind chilled him, and in all the black howling night around there were no human eyes to see, no hand to be raised to aid him...

Some distance off a heavy body thudded softly, dropping from some low tree-branch to the leaf-mold. Only yards away something rose flapping, on blundering wings. Then again, terrifyingly near this time, the tiger roared.

The young man's knees shook and his face went blind and blank with terror. Suddenly he cast his spear from him, whirled, and fled crashing and stumbling, plunging recklessly through the brush, back toward the light and warmth and safety of the cave.

THE SCREEN was dark again. Sheriff Seeger opened his eyes and mopped sweat from his forehead. A few seats away somebody coughed, and the sheriff started. Dammit, these movies didn't make any sense, but they were *real*. He'd not only seen and heard, but felt and smelt the dank night of the rain-forest, the dripping moisture and the rotting mold...

And all the time the part of him that was conscious of being in

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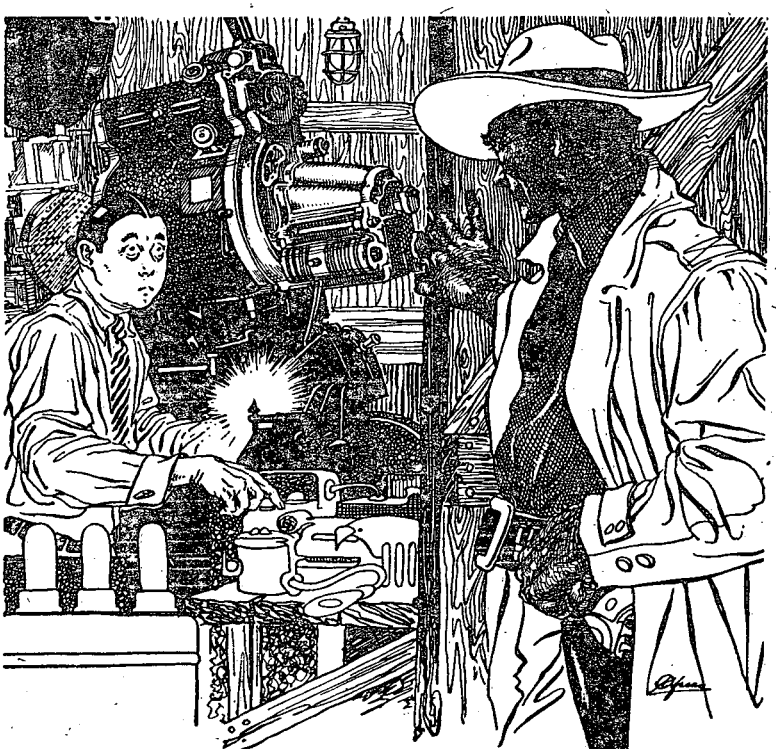

the theater had had that uncanny feeling of being watched from behind. The sheriff half-turned and ran a hand along the wall at his back; it was solid, made of unplaned planks, and he got a splinter in his finger. He sucked it and cursed softly, then froze, finger in mouth, as he saw that another episode was beginning.

Palms nodded in hot sunlight above a tropic beach, and a blue, blue ocean dazzled away to a barrier reef where waves broke creaming. On the beach a man hunkered dejected, a man wasted and browned deeply by sun, in bleached rags of clothing, a castaway. Beside him lay gnawed shards of coconut shell; he gazed out to sea, shading his eyes with a listless hand.

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Then abruptly he sprang to his feet, shaking with excitement. It was—it was—far out across the waves' dance and glitter, a moving whiteness that was no illusion, no mere play of white water—

The sail came nearer, blown by strong breezes, and became a tall three-masted ship, tacking toward the island. The castaway performed a wild fandango of rejoicing; then, as the ship heaved to beyond the reef, he tore off his tattered shirt to wave. But with the cloth in his hand, he stiffened in alarm. The wind had lifted the flag at the vessel's masthead, and even at that distance he could make out the white death's-head stark on black.

The man trembled with indecision; then, as he saw a boat being lowered, crept out of sight into the fronded shrubbery beneath the palm trees.

The pirates rowed ashore, a noisy, variegated gang of ferocious-looking cutthroats, scum of all or at any rate most nations—some half-naked, some decked out in looted finery which was perhaps stiff with the blood of its late owners. Their captain, a burly man with a scoundrelly black beard, barked superfluous orders as four of his crew staggered through the surf under the weight of a great chest; then he paced up and down, pondering at length before deciding on the proper spot for the chest's burial.

Only when the corsair ship was again a speck on the horizon did the concealed watcher creep out of hiding. His breath came fast; he seized an abandoned shovel and began to dig.

His gaunt body was drenched in sweat when at last he uncovered the chest and pried open its lid. He fell panting to his knees, plunged both hands inside and raised them high to let fall a sparkling shower of gold—florins, doubloons, moidores—he groped again, and brought up a double handful of dazzling gems—diamonds, pearls, emeralds, rubies—ablaze with incredible fires in the hot sunlight.

Kneeling in the burning sand, the castaway gazed with lost eyes upon the blinding heap of jewels, and tears of joy scalded down his sunken cheeks.

SHERIFF SEEGER sighed as the scene faded out. "Must've been a million dollars there," he told himself wistfully, then laughed nervously at his own reaction—this was just the movies, and the jewelry was no doubt glass. . . he rubbed his hands together as if to make their palms forget the cool smooth sensuous touch and weight of riches.

An inquiring flute-note thrilled through the theater, lingered and faded, and it was dewy morning in a fresh thicket of late spring,

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where hidden birds made music, and the air was sweetly heavy with opening wild flowers' perfume.

In the green depths moved a whiteness; the veiling leaves were parted, and a woman, a girl, stepped into view...

The sheriff's jaw dropped and his eyes bulged as if trying to get closer to what they were seeing. He whispered under his breath, feeling his hands grow moist.

Nude and shameless, she stood for long moments, feasting on the sunrise and letting it feast upon her. Her hair was as black as a crow's wing and her body was flawless.

She moved with fluid grace, lifting slender arms and bending her whole supple body to avoid the briars that threatened to scratch her soft skin. In a little clearing she fell to her knees in the grass to examine a white flower that nodded there on a fragile stem.

All at once there was a sense of unbearably rising tension, of impending outrage and calamity... The kneeling girl shivered with it, and looked sharply up, flinging the hair back from her face; her beautiful eyes widened and darkened with fear, as they traveled upward, over the shaggy crooked legs, the sinewy arms majestically folded on a broad hairy chest, the smiling bearded lips and burning eyes of the god who stood looking down at her.

The girl screamed, and the singing birds fell frightenedly silent. She leaped up and fled, panic-smitten, through the shadowy woodland, until at last she dropped exhausted, her bosom heaving with panting sobs, on a thick soft carpet of green moss that covered the roots of a great gnarly tree.

Then she raised her eyes once more with premonition, and the rapid breath caught in her throat; for there again, as if he had melted silently out of the rough tree bark, the shaggy Pan stood watching her, eyes mocking, brown arms now welcoming.

Terror, fascination, and despair pursued one another across the girl's mobile features as she crouched motionless; then slowly her long-lashed eyes narrowed and grew knowing, and her scarlet lips moved in the beginning of a smile that was also the beginning of cruelty.

She sprang to her feet and in the same lithe motion, with a wordless crooning like the purr of a great cat, flung both white arms around the neck of the goat-footed god...

LIGHTS were on, evidently signifying the end of the show. Sheriff Seeger sat blinking at the theater's interior—as barnlike as the outside—and the sagging square of white cloth nailed to the unpainted wall; still bemused, he

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got up and edged through the crowd toward the door—open and uncurtained—by which he'd come in.

The audience was surprisingly quiet as it drifted out; most of them stared ahead as if they were ashamed to look at one another. The sheriff did not greet anyone, nor did anyone say hello to him. A startling thought came to him out of nowhere: had all these others seen the same things he had, or. . . ?

Almost out the front entrance, the sheriff stopped short abruptly, recalling why he had come. He scowled, gave a hitch to the gun-belt under his coat, and turned toward the stairway he had noticed earlier.

As he mounted the stairs, his indignation mounted, too. There were a lot of funny things about this place, and when he caught up with the fellow that ran it he was going to demand some explanations. He remembered the box that passed remarks about the weather; the usher that wasn't there; the curious fact that he'd been able to see the screen better with his eyes shut. . . Recollecting, then, something Jesse Hupsman had said, the sheriff seemed to see the key to the whole business.

"This Bullock must be some kind of a crank," Jesse had said.

That was it: the fellow was obviously a crank. And Sheriff Seeger didn't want any such in *his* county.

The door swung open at a push, and an about-face found him in a narrow corridor that evidently ran along above the lobby; it was dark, but light seeped from under a door a few yards away. The sheriff stalked down the corridor and threw open the second door.

Inside, a cubical chamber blazed with light and bristled with outlandish-looking apparatus. In the midst of this, like a small tidy bird in the midst of a large sloppy nest, a little man looked up from some device which kept blinking and emitting cricket-like noises. He had a round face remarkably like that of an old-fashioned t a i l o r ' s dummy, with black hair sleeked back as if painted on, neat regular features, small ears pasted close to his round head.

"Ah—what can I do for you?" inquired the tailor's dummy.

"Mr. Bullock around?" demanded Seeger brusquely.

"My—ah—name is Bwl!x," said the little man, pronouncing the *w* as a vowel rather like a Polish *y*, the *!* as a click, and the *x* as a velar affricate such as occurs in Very High German dialects. "And you—you must be the Sheriff."

"That's right," admitted Seeger, taken aback by this anticipation. But he rallied and eyed the other sternly: "You a foreigner, Mr. Bullock?"

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THE LITTLE man looked somewhat flustered in his turn. "Why, yes, you might say that I am—ah—not native. But how did you know? My accent is imperfect, perhaps? A short circuit, no doubt, but I have no time... ."

"You're right you haven't got much time," said the sheriff gruffly. "I'm giving you tomorrow to clear outa this county—not a minute more."

"Why—what is wrong?" asked Bwl!x injuredly.

"You been showing dirty pictures."

"Some infringement of a sanitary code—but I don't see—"

"Hell, no!" snorted Seeger disgustedly. "I mean you been showing pictures of things decent folks don't even talk about."

"Oh, I see—transgressing a socially established communication-block. There was the same difficulty at—what was that place? Piatigorsk?—they became violent... That short circuit must be affecting my memory." Bwl!x sighed. "I regret the violation of local customs, but it was essential to have response data on all basic drives. Please be assured that I am not performing these experiments out of idle curiosity; they are a strictly business proposition—"

"What kinda business is it where you don't charge nothing?" Seeger glared suspiciously. "This dump of yours gives me the creeps!"

"The creeps? Curious; I don't know the term... Pardon me, I really must examine your record—I don't believe I've fed it to the analyzer yet—and see what you mean by that." Bwl!x switched off the chirping apparatus and attacked another one, punching out an elaborate combination of buttons. "There! Sit down, Sheriff; you too may be interested in reexperiencing this..."

The Sheriff had no opportunity to answer, for at that moment it began. First the pulse-thudding, adrenalin-charged excitement with which he had involuntarily reacted to the vision of savagely-fighting men, the animal fear and fury of it, followed by the feeling of relief and reassurance as the troops had appeared to restore order; then the sense of supernatural awe and terror that had hung over the smoky cave where the skin-clad men huddled together against the darkness... and so on, faithful repetition of every instinctive reaction, every nuance of emotion with which he had responded to the scenes in the theater just now, intolerably compressed and concentrated.

When it came to an end Seeger was slumped back on a providentially handy metal box, breathing loudly through his open mouth. The original performance had left him feeling rather as if he'd been pulled through a wringer by one

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leg; twice in one evening was twice too often. And the playback of his own sensations, unaccompanied by the stimuli that had evoked them, had an uncanny specific effect of its own. A person who hears his own voice played back by a recording machine usually has the feeling of listening to a rather disagreeable stranger—Seeger felt as if he had peered into that unpleasant stranger's mind, and it was a cellar where monstrosities sat squalling out their hates and fears and chuckling over their lusts.

"Very interesting," said Bwl!x. "Now I see what you mean by the—ah—creeps." He noticed his visitor's state and became solicitous. "How careless of me! I hadn't realized that, for one of your mentality... Mm, I believe I have a chemical restorative here somewhere."

He rummaged in his electrical rat's nest and came up—not to the sheriff's surprise, for the sheriff was past surprise—with a squat, familiarly-labelled bottle and a couple of glasses; he poured both of them generously full and handed one to the Sheriff, then sipped his own appreciatively and smiled a tailor's-dummy smile.

"This—" Bwl!x tapped his own chest condescendingly, "is merely a secondary entity, but it has certain simple pleasures of its own, inherent in its—ah—construction. I shall partially regret giving it up."

SEEGER drained his glass and mutely accepted a refill. He put half of that one away, too; then he recovered his voice, and demanded hoarsely, "What's the big idea?"

"The idea...of my activity here? I fear inability to transmit the idea."

"What do you mean— Hey!" Seeger sat up in some alarm. "This ain't some of that government secret stuff, is it? Because if it is, I don't want no—"

"Secret? No, no imposed communication-blocks." Bwl!x smiled faintly as if at a manifest absurdity; then he grew thoughtful. "Perhaps I should try—the attempt might yield useful data... Ah—more restorative?"

"Restorative, hell," said the sheriff. "That's good drinking liquor. I'm almost sorry I got to run you out of the county, Mr. Bullock."

He gave the little man a mellowing, confidential look. "The fact of the matter is, Mr. Bullock, the movie-business around here is sewed up tight. Myself, I sort of enjoyed your show—" he faltered, remembering the still-incomprehensible and soul-shaking repetition of a few minutes ago, but took another gulp of whisky and went on, "and far as I'm con-

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cerned, you could go on holding 'em. But Jesse Hupsman won't stand for nobody coming in and setting up like this."

The perfect dummy's head nodded gravely. "I see. There was much the same trouble in Piatigorsk. But my—ah—movies are not a business; they are merely a sideline, an investigative technique."

"Huh?" The sheriff's suspicions floated to the surface again; he thought, confusingly, of dope rings, spy rings, and—"investigation"—of hush-hush Federal bureaus. "What you up to, then?"

"Actually, my business is—ah—insurance. I believe your subculture uses that term for the collectivization of risks."

"I didn't see you selling no insurance policies."

"I am not a salesman; my role... Let me illustrate, if I can, by familiar analogy. The Owner of a certain piece of Property, who is holding it in the expectation of developing it for use at a later date, applies to—ah—my company for a policy covering the risks of loss or damage in the meantime. Naturally, before issuing such a policy we must examine the Property in question. Upon doing so in this case, we discover that while lying undeveloped and neglected by its Owner it has become—ah—infested. We are compelled to carry out a more searching and scientific investigation, in order to ascertain the exact nature of the infestation and arrive at an estimate of its probable seriousness...

"Or, to take another partially valid analogy: a Person applies to us for coverage of the economic hazards of illness or injury. Physical examination discloses a small growth which may or may not be dangerous; it is necessary for a specialist to examine a few cells from this growth to determine whether they are those of a harmless tumor or of a malignancy that threatens the Person's life.

"This secondary entity of mine has about completed its task as investigator; when you came in I was working on the actuarial treatment of the data... Of course, when I return home it will be possible to subject these data—my collection of records such as that which you reexperienced just now—to a more thorough analysis and obtain a more reliable estimate of the negative-entropy rate and so forth; but the portable analyzer"—Bwl!x tapped the silenced apparatus at his elbow—"is a remarkably effective device..."

THE SHERIFF had not understood a great deal of this explanation; later he would rack his brains over fragments of it and wish that he had questioned the talkative little man. "secondary

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entity", or whatever he was, further. At the moment, though, something in the last remarks had made him put two and two together, and the answer was alarming and infuriating. The sheriff leaned forward, whisky sloshing out of his glass: "Hey! You mean you got a *record* of . . . of *me?*"

Bwl!x was going on: ". . . so it already appears certain . . ."

"Hold on!" snapped Seeger. He rose erect, his brain burning with the memory of that playback experience, and with a budding suspicion that Mr. Bullock's true business might be blackmail. His eyes flashed round the crowded cubicle —noting for the first time that its walls, and the door by which he had come in, were all metal—but failed to locate anything that looked recognizably like a phonograph disk or record spool; that left only the direct approach. He said thickly, "You better give me that record!"

". . . that we cannot afford to issue a policy in this case," finished Bwl!x sadly. "The Owner will be disappointed." He stared, startled, at the Sheriff. "What? No, I can't give you the original Perhaps a copy—"

With a motion that looked awkward but was really very quick, Sheriff Seeger drew his revolver. "All right, then," he said grimly. "I'm onto you now. You're coming down to my jail—"

"—and think it over." The sheriff gulped and fell silent; he was standing, gun still in hand, halfway across the deserted parking lot, facing toward his car.

He turned unsteadily and stared back at the lightless mass of the theater; the drizzle had stopped and there was moonlight. He noted dazedly that his own footprints led across the muddy ground to where he now stood, hesitating among fear, anger, and sheer bewilderment.

The decision as to whether to retrace those unremembered steps was spared him. There was a momentaneous glare like a flash bulb, and he had the impression that something tore explosively upward through the building's roof and vanished instantly in terrific velocity. Splinters of wood showered lazily down, and over the theater a red glow expanded and flames began licking up.

The sheriff stood there a while, watching the fire take hold. Tomorrow he could tell Jesse Hupsman that he could stop worrying about the competition; and tomorrow he would have to come out or send a deputy or two to poke through the ashes, but he had a feeling they wouldn't find anything interesting . . .

"Wonder if Bwl!x had any insurance on the place?" the sheriff muttered to himself.

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NOVELET

ROSIE LIVED IN A BUBBLE

They were safe under the bubble, but the outside world was cut off completely. But what bothered Rosie was the mystery of where Tessie had gotten a new dress, when everyone else was in rags?

BY MONROE SCHERE

illustrated by ORBAN

CRISIS approached Rosie, and bitterly Rosie went to meet crisis on its own unfair terms. Too late to turn back; already, Frank and Tessie had seen her walking toward them in her faded rags.

She had been looking for Frank —but not for Tessie. She had been walking one way along the cracked, heaved, nearly-overgrown concrete highway, past an area of hydroponics tanks abandoned for lack of chemicals; past an expensive tractor that rusted near a paintless barn; past the farmhouses, where each sagging mailbox waited with its flag rusted up to signal the postman who never came. Frank and Tessie, walking out from the center of the Valley toward the Bubble, came the other way. . .

Holding hands. Laughing and flirting. How Frank simply ate up Tessie with his eyes! Tessie, that—

Rosie's thoughts, rarely born of anything but her nubility, ran all together in a soundless shriek. Now, through the bushes and small trees, she saw Tessie more

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clearly. And that no-good, barrel-bottomed, she-thing of a Tessie wore a brand-new, low-cut, tight, gorgeous, incredible dress of the most slinky dacrinitol; it had large, whorled patterns of beads on the bosom and its hue was neither more nor less than flaming red.

This, in a community gone completely ragged. This as Rosie, who desperately wanted Frank, approached in a house dress so aged that its patches were patched.

"Why, hi!" said Tessie. "You're looking very becoming."

"Hi, Rosie!" Frank released Tessie's hand and shoved his hands into the pockets of his rotting overalls. "Howza girl, Rosie?"

"Look what I found in an old trunk," Tessie said.

"What?" said Rosie. "Oh. Yeah."

Tessie showed her big teeth. "Ain't I lucky? Found that big old trunk in the hayloft, opened it up and there was this dress. And just my size, too."

"Hnnnnnnn," said Rosie.

Frank leered. "Well, what I tell Tessie is, you never can tell what will happen to a girl in a hayloft, haw-haw!"

"Oooh, ain't he awful?" Tessie pulled Frank's beard. "He was saying a minute ago that he can't keep his eyes offa me, and I am his woo girl, and now he gets so awful. I don't know how you stood his awful ways, Rosie, when he used to keep company with you."

Rosie heated, dizzied, swallowed, steadied. "Hon, I shouldn't mention it," she said, "but you ought to let that dress out a little. Below the waist, sort of; you know what I mean?"

"Is that so!"

Frank slid his arm around Tessie protectively. "Zat so! I like her this way! Gosh, when a fella hasn't seen a woman who looks like a woman used to look for years and years!" Although Frank had been a little too young to be drafted, he would not have been drafted in any event because the draft of men and women in Earth's final war was governed by I. Q. "Stop being jealous, just because you didn't find a dress, Rosie!"

"And furthermore," Tessie said, "I am perfectly happy that I am not a skinny bag of bones like certain people."

"Ah, go kiss the Bubble!" Rosie walked on, followed by Tessie's comfortable and confident laughter.

Her eyes stung. Frank was that way—crazy about women's clothes and cosmetics—and what could she do about it? Her newest dress had been ragged for years...

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IN THE EARLY days of the Bubble, back when a girl still might be able to sew together something worth wearing, back when a girl still might find a smidge of perfume in the bottom of a bottle—that's where you'd always find Frank, gloating.

Later, when every woman drifted into a common shabbiness, at least he had seen the beauty of Rosie's dark blue eyes and natural blonde hair.

They'd sit in some forever-parked helicar and talk about their highschool days...before the Ship, before the Bubble, before the week of war. They'd talk about the nice dresses Rosie used to buy in Norristown, and about Frank's nice hound's-tooth-check jacket that the moths got. And they would talk of bygone parties.

And they talked of love; Rosie had to keep Frank from doing much more than talking.

Frank kept on saying he wanted nothing better than being a bachelor. But gradually, he admitted, the old folks sure were making it hell for a fellow to stay single.

Tobe Hooten, the Selectman, Reverend Sperling and all the rest—they nagged and preached and for-instanced how important it was to preserve marriage and all the customs that make civilization. Yeah, Frank said, he would have to let himself get hooked one of these days.

Like that—talking, necking, getting ready to give way to the rules that still governed their tiny Bubble-world. At least, Rosie thought in stern self-restraint, Frank would give way to the rules when he became convinced he couldn't have her any other way.

And now Tessie had found that damned dress!

Had Rosie gotten Frank all primed for marriage, only to have him hooked by a dress on the rump of unspeakable Tessie?

It was maddening. If Tessie hooked Frank, that left just one man whom Rosie might marry: Henry Smals! She shuddered. Fifty-year-old widower Henry with his cackling voice, with his meals in his beard!

She looked up wildly. "I've got to get a dress—or a hat—or something pretty that Frank will go for!" She flung out her arms at what was not the horizon and the sky. With no logic but with a great deal of frustration and yearning— "Can't you go away for just long enough for me to get to Norristown!" she screamed.

The Bubble did not move for screaming; the Bubble did not move. Like a teacup turned upside-down above a colony of ants, that two-mile hemisphere remained, as it had remained for twelve years,

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a lid upon the fields and the farms and the cattle and the chickens and the people of Schoonmaker's Valley.

APPARENTLY, the Bubble was controlled by the Ship. A moment before the Bubble appeared, the Ship—a black, hundred-foot, featureless teardrop of metal—came to rest in a copse which now lay at the exact center of the Bubble. And nobody could do anything about the Ship or the Bubble.

The Bubble, light grey and translucent, let in the sun's diffused light. The Bubble was a perfectly smooth, impenetrable layer of frozen force. It damned and dried up the Valley's little river; cut off the railroad; cut off the power and telephone lines; cut off radio and TV; cut off the road... cut off the world and the sky from the Valley, and cut off the Valley from the sky and the world.

Ram a tractor full-tilt against the bottom of the Bubble—you could not dent it. Let twenty men swing a rusty rail battering-ram—you could not scratch it. Shoot at it with a 30-30—your bullet flattened and left no mark. And the same with the Ship. Try dynamite against Bubble or Ship—no result beyond noise...

Dig to burrow beneath the edge of the Bubble...and after months of dangerous digging and shoring, five hundred feet down you met the Bubble still. You met it curving slightly inward, so you could assume it really was a sphere, and walled the Valley even underneath.

Weep against the Bubble, Mother...tears will not dissolve it. You will not regain the child cut off at the other end of the turnip field when the Bubble came down suddenly. (For a while they saw, the little boy's shadow leap against the Bubble outside; then nothing). Planes and other objects of war crashed against the outside of the Bubble during its first hour of existence; after that, nothing.

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For twelve dull years, nothing. The last operative tractor coughed on the last drop of gasoline. Electric stoves got made into wood-burners, somehow. Men fumbled to hammer modern farm implements into the pattern of antiques. Clothing became more and more nondescript. Reading, writing, religion and moral law remained, zealously guarded—so far. But what would happen if the Bubble remained for generations, or forever?

Already, among the seventy-eight inhabitants of that two-mile circle, there were half-grown children who scarcely believed that beyond the Bubble lay a world. What would happen to these children's grandchildren . . . when the last book rotted?

At least, it seemed as though the people of the cut-off Valley would endure—much as fish may live indefinitely in a balanced aqarium. Although the Valley had not supported a single horse, there had been good cows and one precious bull; so now there were more cows, and also oxen for plowing. The farmers kept a variety of crops that luckily had included wheat, unluckily had not included tobacco. Everything grew rapidly beneath the Bubble. Because one William Penn long ago had decreed that one acre in four of every farm should be kept in woodlot, the Valley had fuel. Beneath the Bubble they rarely had freezing weather.

And beneath the Bubble, out of nowhere, for no fathomable reason, just enough rain fell for exactly six hours every third day.

Thus Rosie's Bubble-world—drained of good minds, shabby and bewildered, yet apparently able to survive. And Rosie, till now, at least had been able to blow golden mind-bubbles of marriage.

But now Tessie, and a trunk in an attic, had robbed her of that. Frank had not changed; Frank could not withstand the outward adornments of women.

"Why?" wailed Rosie. "Why did Tessie have to find that dress instead of me?"

WHIMPERING, she wandered, burning to burst through the Bubble for just one hour of shopping in Norristown. Frank was going, going, going. She met neighbors, and they all must have seen Frank and Tessie, for they all smiled and looked wise. She kept her head down, watching the ruined road. "I've *got* to get dressed up!" she sobbed.

As she approached the greying farmhouse where she lived, she saw Henry Smals talking to her father. She dug her nails into her palms, turned and hurried away.

She hid at length in the loneliest spot in the too-tiny Valley. There, in woods broken by its

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landing and by dynamite, but since grown lushly, lay the Ship. She spat at it. She entered upon a season of hysterics, scratched and punched and kicked the cold dew-beaded Ship and wept for liberty. Since she did her kicking in sandals woven of strips of chipmunk-skin, she ended by weeping over her bruised toes; at last she fell asleep on the grass beneath the outswell of the Ship.

She wakened with the feeling that someone had spoken to her. It was dark. A silvery blotch on the Bubble showed where a full moon rode. . . and of course, Tessie and Frank were snuggled down somewhere in the faint moonlight.

"You did not hear me before. I said I am indeed sorry you do not have a husband," a man's voice said.

"Well, I hope you *are* sorry, you son of a—"

Rosie paused. She looked around and upward at the Ship. She said "Uh!" and began to scrabble away.

"Please do not go!"

A tree stopped Rosie. Also, something in that man's voice pierced her fright. It was a resonant, gentlemanly voice, slightly foreign but foreign in a nice way.

"May I talk to you? I assure you I mean you no harm."

Trembling, Rosie stared up through the silver-touched darkness at the side of the Ship.

A MAN STOOD in an opening ten feet above her. He was about seven feet tall; he wore a gracefully-draped sheet of shimmery pink cloth, belted with metal links, and boots of metal mesh. He was an adult male, yet he was clean-shaven.

"My name is Tora Pannidev," he said. "I live here. I have not talked to another human being in a long time. I should greatly value the privilege of talking to you."

"M-my name is Miss Rose Violet Kerkhoff. . . uh, Rosie is all right." The man seemed to radiate a genuine friendliness. Also, she partly believed she still was asleep and dreaming.

"Rose-ee," he repeated. Reflectively— "Yes, many of your females are named after flowers." Kindly— "I did not want to startle you while you were perturbed. I judge by your statements of the time that you have lost the attentions of a male named Frank."

"Yeah, if you want to put it that way."

"I am sorry indeed. As is perhaps evident, I control the protective sphere your people call the Bubble. I assure you, Rosie, you could not find a mate outside the Bubble, either."

"Hah? Frank's *inside*, ain't he?"

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Tora Pannidev squatted in the opening and peered down at her. His eyes glinted strangely; he nodded as though he had found something he expected to find. "May I come down and talk to you more comfortably?"

"Well—don't touch me!"

He leaped down lightly; she shrank away. He smiled. "I am lonesome too, Rosie."

"Well—well—who's keeping you here, anyway? Whyn't you fly away home and take your Bubble with you!"

He blinked his queer eyes. "I shall indeed collapse the Bubble; and I shall go home in about six of your months, Rosie. If I collapsed the Bubble now, you all would die."

"Yeah? What do you mean?"

He sat on a fallen tree. It was hard to tell whether he was young or old, especially when he gave her his sharp-featured, somehow charming smile. "Do you recall the day I arrived—the day the Bubble came into being? Do you remember the quality of the air, that day?"

"Oh, yeah. It got kind of choky; my grandmother had an awful asthma attack..."

"Every human being and many lesser forms of life outside the Bubble choked to death of acute allergic symptoms, Rosie."

"You mean...everyone outside ...all dead?"

"All, Rosie. Outside the Bubble, your race is dead; your civilization is dead. Those who used allergy-dusts as a weapon of war thought they could control the dusts' spread. They could not; the dusts are alive, and as they spread in the wind they multiplied fantastically. I hope you find a mate and bear children, Rosie. You seventy-eight individuals inside the Bubble are all that remain of your race."

"Oh...gee...my cousins in Pittsburgh...and George and Hans and Wilma and Freda, and everybody else around here who got drafted...and Mr. Opdycke the coach at the school, he was so nice...and even the telecine actors...*everybody* dead? Oh gee..."

"Don't cry, Rosie. Think instead of your race reborn again from this nucleus and spreading across your planet after I lift the Bubble. The dusts are disappearing; I will free you in six months."

Rosie sniffled. "Yeah. And I'll be Mrs. Henry Smals; that'll be fun, huh. Supposing I even get to Norristown and take all the dresses I like—I mean, it really isn't stealing if everybody's dead and you can just help yourself—do you think I want to get dressed up for dirty old *Henry?*"

TORA PANNIDEV opened his mouth and closed it. "I should

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tell you that my home is on the planet Mirella, light years distant. I was making a routine check of your civilization when—"

"Mir—you mean Mars, don't you? Isn't that where fellas come from when they live on planets and things—like in the Sunday paper—they come from Mars?"

Tora Pannidev grew a little tense. His fingers drummed upon the log. "You are fortunate I realized your plight when I was over this valley. By creating the Bubble I doomed myself to a tedious and lonesome time. To save a civilization, however, is part of our ethic." He waited till she seemed to concentrate. His fingers relaxed; he leaned forward and his voice went soft. "I have philosophy and art to occupy me—but Rosie, I am as human as you. The human being anywhere in the universe wants the company of his fellows. I am very lonesome; that is why I took the risk of talking to you. You won't tell anybody about me, will you? You look like an intelligent person whom I can trust..."

"Well—okay."

He seemed to plead, now. "I have tried to make it comfortable for all of you. I give you sufficient rain; I keep your air pure. I have enriched your soil. I make sure you have wind at pollinating time. I cannot help the dearth of men available for marriage. I

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check outside the Bubble very often, and I assure you that the moment the outside air is breathable I will collapse the Bubble. Your life then will become infinitely exciting and rewarding—"

"Yeah, what's exciting about being married to Henry Smals! Listen!" Rosie tensed with hope. "Maybe you could get hold of Frank and sort of—you know—give him a shot or something—so he'll stop looking at Tessie no matter what she wears and he'll only want to marry *me?*"

Tora Pannidev frowned. "That would amount to unwarranted interference in your personal affairs. Our ethic does not permit—"

"Ah, talk, talk, all you do is talk!" Then Rosie brightened. "But you go outside! Listen—maybe, next time you're outside, could you just go down to Norristown and get me a couple of things?"

"I am sorry; that, too, would amount to unwarranted—"

"Ah, come on! Look, I'll come up here any time you say and you don't have to feel lonely . . . but just get me a couple of things, will you, huh? Pa still has a deck of cards and I'll bring them along when I come; we can play rummy or anything you like . . . but please? All I want is a nice dress and some shoes and stockings—12 denier, or even 15 denier as long as I have stockings—and some lipstick and rouge and powder and maybe a hat or two and gee, if you could get me some perfume!"

"I cannot; I assure you—"

"But Tessie will get Frank!" Rosie wailed. "You're on her side, that's what! That's what you are!"

"No, no, I—"

"I might as well stand out in the fields and be a scarecrow for all that Frank notices me," Rosie wept. "Look at me, look at me! Rags!"

After a long pause, Tora Pannidev said, "Perhaps within our ethic I could give an individual a measure of deserved happiness . . ."

"Oh gee, you'll do it?"

HE LOOKED around uneasily. "I must think about it. I . . . must re-enter my vehicle now and make some adjustments to the energy tank. If you will do me the honor of coming in, too? We can talk in more comfort, inside."

"Go in *there?* Well—I don't know—well—you *seem* to be respectable—"

"I have three wives," Tora Pannidev said, "and eighteen children."

"Wow!" Rosie giggled.

"Somehow," he said softly, "you remind me of my favorite daughter. She, too, has yellow hair, and like your eyes, all the facets of her eyes reflect a hue reminiscent of

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the dawn aurora when it's springtime on Mirella. . .forgive my ignorance of Earthly standards, but are you considered beautiful?"

Rosie fluffed her hair and wiggled. "Well, I'm considered not so bad, you might say."

He cleared his throat. "How unjust that such beauty should languish for the lack of mere adornment! The more I think about it, the more I. . .but I must attend to the energy tank. Will you not do me the honor of entering my vehicle?"

"You mean you really might get over to Norristown and sort of look into the shop windows and—?"

"I assure you I am considering it strongly. May I assist you to enter?"

"Well. . .you're a married man, I guess, and pretty respectable. . ."

He bent and heaved her into the Ship.

He followed quickly, touched a stud. The opening disappeared. "I wouldn't want anyone to notice," he said apologetically.

SHE STOOD in a huge room that contained a massive control-board; a spidery but comfortable-looking couch; a chair; an easel; a work-table on which stood some tools and flasks and something like a printing press. Various pictures hung along the walls.

"Oooh, you drew these? Pictures from outside, huh? Buildings. . .a factory. . .!"

He stood close behind her. "My little attempts at art, as well as a record to supplement photography with mood."

"They're nice drawings." She glanced around. "Oh, now I see why your eyes look different. A lot of little lenses, like a bee's eyes, if you'll excuse the expression."

"But I am quite human," Tora Pannidev said; "and I have been very lonesome."

"Yeah, nothing to do but make paintings. You sure did do a lot of them."

He touched her arms to guide her along the gallery. "The technique of representation is not what is called painting. There is another word. . .I cannot recall it. . ."

"Sketching, maybe?"

"No. . .that is not quite the word."

Frank, the Eligible, stinking with sweat and very weary, wrestled an approximation of a moldboard plow and found no pleasure in setting his bare feet into fresh-turned earth nor into his ox's contribution.

At the end of the row he jerked the plow around. One handle broke off; he let go of the other. The ox continued its wonted way, dragging the plow sidewise on the

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surface. Frank cursed the ox, cursed the plow, roundly and soundly cursed the Bubble.

"Is that any kind of language?" said a voice like a dove's.

Through his sweat, Frank smelled heady flowers...more than flowers...the breath of Araby...the product of that trade which, before the final war, used to run advertisements that rang every change upon *caress, excite, surrender...*

He looked.

She wore green. Strapless green; also long jade earrings. The shoes were slight and silly and green; the hose 12 denier; the nails red; the lips red; the cheeks red. She had done her hair in a home permanent, and above this had affixed a thing with green feathers.

"You remember years ago a car got wrecked on the bridge? Well, I found a valise in the bushes under the bridge. The valise must have dropped out of the car. And what do you think—the valise had this dress and shoes and perfume and everything else in it! How do I look?" said Rosie.

There blew a little breeze and Frank stood downwind. There blew a little breeze, although it was yet months before pollinating time, and Frank uttered a low moan; and for Frank it became, most urgently, pollinating time.

Rosie wore the remnants of her mother's wedding gown. Everybody said the bride looked beautiful; everybody, that is, except Tessie.

Tessie, who married Henry Smals the next day, wore her own mother's better-preserved wedding gown. Everybody, including that generous and open-hearted young matron, Rosie, said the bride looked beautiful. Rosie also essayed to kiss Tessie. Rosie only smiled her tolerance when Tessie kicked her viciously in the shin.

Within a few weeks, however, Tessie smiled more than Rosie; Henry Smals turned out to be a kindly, considerate husband. Frank was lazy, futile, bad-tempered, resentful of having been hooked; and he made a horror of Rosie's private life. He was a most offensive clothes fetishist.

Spring advanced. Buds ripened and fruit trees blossomed within

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the Bubble as they did in tragic pageant outside. Coyly, Tessie announced she was expectant; so did Rosie.

Summer advanced. Rain fell for exactly four hours every third day. Crops were good. The multiple candle-dipping frame was re-invented. A two-headed calf was born, but since nobody knew how to make money out of it, it was butchered. Groundhogs, thriving on lack of ammunition, became more of a nuisance than ever. An old barn collapsed. A girl searching an attic for clothes broke her leg when she fell off a ladder. Reverend Sperling died. Grandma Kerkhoff died. Frank, who was utterly lacking in other talents, persisted in his wasteful hobby of making a mash out of corn and allowing this mash to ferment.

LATE IN October—dates had become uncertain—the Bubble disappeared.

The world in an instant grew golden-bright. Shafts of sunlight streamed gloriously, sparkling at windows; a wild, unfettered, dusty wind whooped across Schoonmaker's Valley.

Rosie hurried cautiously outside and saw everyone else running outside, squinting at the cloud-dappled sky, pointing, shouting. They listed a joyous catalog of almost-forgotten views— There's Sister Mountain! There's the Big Rocks! Down in the riverbed, children gathering berries scrambled out of the way of rushing water. Cows in the pastures looked up, then went on grazing.

Out of the Valley the Ship rose steadily. It kept going straight up, up, up, smaller and smaller until it moved forever out of sight.

Now silent and afraid, people walked on the broken road. Where the Bubble had stood they came to a water-seeping crack in the earth; beyond, in its drifts of Autumn leaves, stood a low and unfamiliar wilderness.

At the first farmhouse—more weathered than those in the Bubble, but still not wrecked—a party ascended the spongy porch. Someone knocked at the door. "Well—" he said, and pushed it open.

He came out looking pale. He pulled the door closed carefully. "Skeletons . . ."

They found two wrecked planes and scattered bones. They found tractors standing with rag-fluttering skeletons in the seats. They kept watching the sky, but only the clouds flew. And that at last convinced them; in the old days, you always saw something man-made flying in the sky.

The funeral held in the Valley churchyard, that night, was symbolic of all the Valley men and women drafted; all the cousins in Pittsburgh; all the neighbors down

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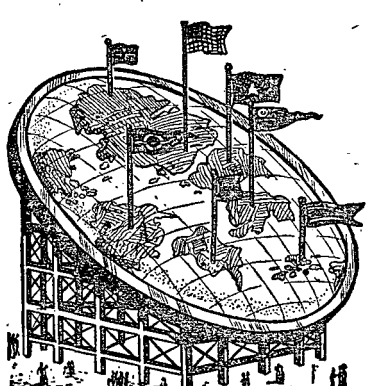
the road. What they buried were the bones of a child that a middle-aged woman found just beyond the edge of a turnip field, just outside the water-seeping crack. They huddled beneath the well-remembered glittering stars, and wept; later they huddled in bed, terrified of the new immensity.

TOBE HOOTEN, the Selectman, presided over a mass meeting at the church next morning. "The way it looks to me on—ah—on this first full day of our liberty, this glorious day to be remembered, is—ah—that other people absolutely must be alive somewhere. Because somebody put that Bubble over us for some purpose, right? Chances are to protect us, right? Because I figure that if anyone in the Ship wanted to kill us, he could go ahead and kill us."



Most of the people thought he was right. Rosie, in her altered best dress, looked non-committal.

"Well, then, here's what I think we ought to do. Ought to scatter around and find a couple of helicars that still work, and some gas. And go and find those people; and ask them to take us in."

In the midst of a general discussion about ways and means, Rosie sat biting her lips. Finally she raised her hand.

Tobe Hooten looked at her, hesitated, looked beyond her and said, "Well, I guess Rosie had her hand up first."

Rosie stood slowly. "Well gee, it isn't as though I know anything. But I got a sort of an idea—maybe that Ship wasn't from the Earth at all; maybe it came from Mars or someplace." There was chuckling. "Well I mean, how do we know it wasn't from Mars? We'd be wasting an awful lot of time looking for other people if everybody else is dead."

Tobe nodded and smiled. "All right, Rosie; you're entitled to your opinion."

"But I mean—"

"Now Rosie, Tessie back there had her hand up too. Go ahead, Tessie."

Tessie?

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Rosie in green and Tessie in red stared at each other. Tessie looked as though she wished she had not raised her hand.

Reluctantly, Tessie said, "Well, it's funny, but I had the same idea. Like as if somebody came from one of those planet stars and put down the Bubble. You know, when the air went bad and we were all sort of choked-up, remember, in the war? I think you're right, Mr. Hooten, about someone in the Ship keeping us alive. But I've got that funny feeling he might be from Mars or somewhere." She added awkwardly, "I don't know where I got the same kind of feeling." Her sweating hands twitched at her red dress and she looked straight at Rosie, who looked straight back with a wild surmise.

Tobe smiled kindly; Tobe said he was the last man on earth who wanted to be indelicate. But if Rosie and Tessie had the same kind of funny feeling, why, he had an idea he knew how they had gotten that feeling (laughter) and don't worry, ladies, in three-four months the feeling will go away (roars of laughter).

A COMMITTEE of men found gasoline at a filling station and got a tractor going. Dragging a trailer, it bucked its way to Norristown. It returned with a pile of canned food; shoes; dresses; overalls; cigarettes; smoking and chewing tobacco; and, out of a wide-open bank, an awesome bundle of useless money. Thus the re-exploration of the Earth began. Of course, they found no other living people, and soon stopped looking.

The war had not destroyed much beyond human beings. Now owning endless stores of food and good drink and shelter, those who had endured inside the Bubble found no incentive for work. They formed parties to carry out gay adventures— Let's go to Washington and live in the White House! Let's go to Philadelphia and ring the Liberty Bell! They were not the right people for renewing a civilization; they were merely ordinary folk.

But Rosie's child and Tessie's child were born with a sense of destiny. They were slightly freakish, but they were tall, strong and enormously clever.

Rosie's Mary, by the time she was fourteen, mastered higher mathematics. She found a way to revive an Idaho power pile; she also traveled the world to make sure of the preservation of the finest works of art.

Tessie's Henry, Jr., was a marvelous organizer. Along with Mary, he made sure that civilization did not trickle away. Among other feats, he mapped the world into naturally-bounded areas, listed

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READIN' and WRITHIN'

BOOK REVIEWS

by L. Sprague De Camp

LAST SUMMER, on a vacation-trip through New England, I hunted up some places and things of scientific psuedo-scientific, and literary interest. I visited the Round Tower of Newport, (which, so far as excavations show, was not built by the Vikings after all) and Dighton Rock in Taunton River. Dighton Rock was under water, so I had to come back next morning at low tide, to walk squilch-squilch over black ooze, littered with dead crabs, and climb up on the rock. The seaward side, with the inscriptions of alleged Egyptian Phoenician, Druidic, Norse, Chinese, Atlantean, or other exotic origin, is too covered with algae and barnacles to make out much, but I thought I could see the *M* of the name of Miguel Corte-Real. This is the Portuguese explorer who set out in 1503 for Newfoundland and was never heard of again, until in the 1920's Professor Delabarre detected his name, with initials he interpreted as *Rex Indiorum*, 1511, under the more recent carvings. Now there is talk of erecting a monument to Miguel,

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who apparently ended his days as a chief among the Narragansets.

In Providence I hunted up the places associated with H. P. Lovecraft: his grave, the houses where he lived, and the file on him in the public library. He is buried in a family plot in Swan Point Cemetery, in an unmarked grave, but his name is on the central shaft of granite. (I regret to say I saw no Fungi from Yuggoth growing on the grave.) He lived in three houses, all of wooden clapboard construction: till 1926 in a dark-brown house at 454 Angell St., now full of physicians' offices; from 1926 to 1933 in a monstrous twin-duplex apartment-house at 10 Barnes St., and from 1933 to his death in 1937 in a plain blue-gray house at 66 College St., set back from the street just off the Brown University campus.

In the library I found, among other things, the long article that Sonia H. Davis, Lovecraft's ex-wife, wrote in 1948 for the Providence *Journal* about her life with Lovecraft. This was reprinted in the periodical *Books at Brown* (Vol. XI, Nos. 1 & 2, Feb. 1949). You can get a copy for a dollar from the Brown University Library.

This piece, if it doesn't Tell All, reveals a great deal. It underlines the venomous animosity of Lovecraft towards immigrants of non-British origin (Slavs, Jews, Latins, etc.) August Derleth tells me that this dislike was based upon Lovecraft's hatred of the changes in his beloved Providence, for which he held these "aliens" responsible. As he persisted in this xenophobic attitude when he went to live in New York, on the ample earnings of Sonia (herself of Russian-Jewish origin, and I am told a lady of great charm and magnetism), his sojourn there was not congenial.

Finally his obsession with the "mongrel horde of beady-eyed, rat-faced Asiatics" (as he described the heterogenious crowds of New York) drove him back to Providence and ended what had always been an unconventional union. At the time of their marriage Sonia was seven years older than Lovecraft, a widow with a daughter. Later she went to California where she married a retired professor (who died ten years later) and where she still lives; she seems to have had a shabby deal.

The moral would seem to be: girls, never marry anybody in the hope of "making a man of him." If he isn't one already, nothing you can do will make him one.

(As for Lovecraft's sexuality—a subject on which some ears are no doubt twitching with curiosity at this point—this is not discussed in the publications cited. My information is that he was neither impotent nor perverted; he just didn't care for it as much as earthier types.)

WHAT HAS all this to do with books? Well, a recent book of literary criticism, Peter Penzoldt's "The Supernatural in Fiction" (London: Peter Nevill, 1952, xii + 271 pp., $4.50; no index) gives several pages to Lovecraft. This book originated as a Ph. D. thesis by a young Swiss-American student of psychoanalysis at the University of Geneva. It has been the subject of widely-divergent reviews. Thus Orville Prescott of the *New York Times* calls it "a pioneer and scholarly work of con-

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siderable value," while the editors of *Fantasy and Science Fiction* find it so full of "factual errors, caprices in judgment and lacunae in knowledge...that we frankly can't see why the book was ever published."

If you will let me indulge in a review of a review of a review (or a review[3]) I suspect that the animadversions of Messers Boucher and McComas may be not unconnected with Dr. Penzoldt's vigorous Freudianism, and his snapshots at some aspects of medieval Christianity. The book has faults, true, but it is still a pretty good book of its kind, albeit a bit overpriced. As for Mr. Prescott, it might be of interest to note that in the same review he said some tart things about the fantasies of "modern American pulp writers, whose flippant manner, clumsy writing and dependence on silly novelties make their work seem unworthy to be bound in the same volume" (Conklin's recent "Supernatural Reader") "with that of such expert English writers as A. E. Coppard, Saki, M. R. James..." etc. In other words the late-Victorian ghost-story which was good enough for Mr. Prescott's grandfather is good enough for him. And, as this is the kind of story mainly dealt with by Penzoldt, Prescott would naturally favor Penzoldt's book.

The book's main fault is, I think, that the author has not picked a well-defined field and exhausted it. Though he has read widely, one gets the impression that the scope of the work was limited not by logical categories but by the number of books Penzoldt had time to read before his thesis was due. Thus the work is not a study of "the supernatural in fiction," but of the stories of a limited and arbitrarily-selected group of authors, (nearly all British), writing in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, whose appeal was mainly to the emotions of horror and terror, mainly through the use of supernatural elements. The study is not exclusively British, as it takes up the work of the Americans Henry James, Lovecraft, and Hartley. It is not even exclusively concerned with the supernatural, as Dr. Penzoldt devotes pages to non-supernatural horror-stories by Kipling, Harley, Crawford, and others. The authors dealt with at greatest length are Le Fanu, Scott, Lytton, Marryat, Dickens, Stevenson, Kipling, Crawford, Machen, Lovecraft, Hartley, M. R. James, de la Mare, Henry James, Aiken, Harvey, and Blackwood.

Some stories, such as Kipling's, are minutely dissected. The book is mainly concerned with ghost-stories, though it gives some attention to tales of vampires and werewolves, and elder-godly stories of the type of Machen and Lovecraft. I think Penzoldt is at his best in discussing the work of these two authors; he is perceptive, illuminating, and just. He puts Blackwood at the top of his list. I agree that Blackwood is among the leading fantasists of our time, but without quite such uncritical admiration; at times Blackwood's leisurely and prolix atmospheric-development gets downright dull. The lighter types of fantasy, such as those that made up the bulk of *Unknown* and *Fantasy Fiction*, are brushed aside as "fairy-tales" and not treated at all. The author displays an un-

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wonted squeamishness towards the horror of Machen and his like, finding it "repulsive," "disgusting," and discrediting to the whole supernatural field. (If he wants to be *really* disgusted, let him read some of the perverse fancies of Aleister Crowley.)

As for the "factual errors... and lacunae in knowledge," a few of them are: Penzoldt's treatment of voodoo is not knowledgeable (p. 46). In discussing the origins of science-fiction he jumps from Poe to Wells without mentioning Verne, the link between these two in the chain of influence (p. 50). The theory of mutation did *not* "replace" Darwin's evolutionism; it amplified it (p. 52). The author takes seriously the "collective unconscious" theory of Jung, surely the most implausible vagary to come out of psychoanalytical speculation.

On the other hand he has resisted what must have been a temptation to indulge in posthumous psychoanalysis of his writers. He makes many good points: e. g. a chapter on the importance of titles in spooky stories; or in comparing such stories favorably with the vogue for passing off "static sketches" as short stories. "To my mind the creation of such breathless suspense is a greater achievement than the quasi-journalistic account of what Miss X and Mr. Y said at a cocktail-party before they went to bed."

As for his claiming too much territory in his title, well, if Dr. Kinsey can call a book "Sexual Behavior of the Human Female" when he means "Sexual Behavior of a Selected Group of Twentieth-Century Bourgeois American Women as Subjectively Reported by Themselves", I suppose Dr. Penzoldt is entitled to his title, too. And I suppose that every author of such a scholarly work no sooner sent his proofs off to the printer than he came upon source-books he should have read but didn't, stating facts he ought to have known before writing, but didn't.

ANOTHER meritorious bibliographical work is "An Index on the Weird and Fantastica (sic!) in Magazines", compiled by Bradford M. Day, 127-01 116th Av., South Ozone Park 20, N. Y. (1953, 162 pp., paper, $2.00). This is a mimeographed publication with pages of the same size as those of the other Day's (no relationship) "Index to the Science-Fiction Magazines". It lists all the stories, with names of authors, by issues, down to the beginning of 1953, in the magazines *Weird Tales, Strange Tales, Magic Carpet, Thrill Book, Golden Fleece, Oriental Stories, Tales of Magic & Mystery*, and *Strange Stories*, of which only the first is still in existence. It also lists imaginative stories in all the issues of thirteen other magazines (e. g. *Blue Book* and *Argosy*) and some of the issues of a few other magazines (e. g. *Adventure* and *Cosmopolitan*).

Then comes Day's "Checklist of Fantastic Magazines", which he published as a 23-page pamphlet at $1.00 earlier last year. This lists all the issues of all the imaginative magazines published since the *Black Cat* began in 1895, by volume, number, and date, with a few incomplete listings which the author notes. This is done by a series of charts.

The book has told me several

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things I did not know and, for the connoisseur, is well worth the price. It is not such a large-scale work as the other Day's "Index". For example it does not distinguish pseudonyms, nor does it list stories and authors alphabetically. The numbers following the titles of some stories mean the number of installments of a serial beginning with that issue—a fact that the author does not mention till his last page. The word "fantastica" was suggested to Mr. Day by a friend. It is a theoretically-possible medieval-Latin derivative from the Greek adjective *phantastikos, -a, -on,* but is listed in no English or Latin dictionary that I possess.

Mr. Day tells me that he is preparing another bibliographical work: an index of books of imaginative fiction not listed in Bleiler's "Checklist of Fantastic Literature". This will comprise a lot missed by Bleiler as well as the huge mass of such books that have appeared since publication of the "Checklist".

Another notable addition to the bibliographical literature of imaginative fiction is "333: A Bibliography of the Science-Fantasy Novel" (Providence: Grandon Co., 1953, 80 pp., $2.00, paper) by Joseph H. Crawford, Jr., James J. Donahue, and Donald M. Grant.

After an introduction that classifies imaginative stories as the Gothic romance, the weird tale, science fiction proper, fantasy, the lost-race story, the fantastic adventure, the tale of unknown worlds, the oriental novel, the associational (that is, borderline) pieces, the authors run through 333 imaginative novels, giving for each one a synopsis of the story from 100 to 150 words long. The 333 books are listed alphabetically by the names of the authors, and there is an index in which the stories are listed by title. After each title in the main list, the compilers state which of the above eight classes the story falls into.

To give you an idea of the meaning of these terms, the authors class Walpole's "Castle of Otranto" as a Gothic romance; Stoker's "Dracula" as a weird tale; E. E. Smith's "First Lensman" as science fiction; Dunsany's "King of Elfland's Daughter" as fantasy; Merritt's "Dwellers in the Mirage" as a lost-race story; Howard's "Conan the Conqueror" as a fantastic adventure; Brown's "What Mad Universe" as a story of unknown worlds; Mundy's "Jimgrim" as oriental; and Rohmer's "She Who Sleeps" as associational. The oriental and associational classes are both small, consisting to a large extent in each case of stories by Talbot Mundy. The oriental stories are those that make the widespread, if unfounded, assumption that Asia is a mysterious place full of persons possessing arcane wisdom or mystical powers. The term "associational" is applied to a few borderline novels which, though primarily adventure-stories, are so informed with exotic color or contain such hints of super-science, or the supernatural, that they can almost be classed as regular imaginative stories. The authors confess what any intelligent *aficionado* would know already: that many stories would fit into either of two or more classes at once.

The classification seems sensible. The book itself is a good piece of work that has already proved

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useful to me by revealing that, in my own specialty of lost-continent stories, there are several that I not only had not read, but had never even heard of. For the connoisseur, the book is well worth the price. The 8-point type is not the easiest to read, though its use was no doubt dictated by considerations of cost. In conventional format this would have made a cloth-bound volume of respectable size.

I do have some complaints. Not that I advise anybody not to buy the book because of them, but that the book ought, by avoiding them, to be even better. For one, the expression "Science-Fantasy Novel" is a terminological monster. It's like referring to the owner of a pet-shop as a seller of bird-fishes and cat-dogs. For another, the number of errors of fact and of typography is higher than it should have been, indicating incompetent copy and proof-reading. As an example of the former, the priests to whom Conan returned the Heart of Ahriman were priests of Asura, not "priests of Shem." For the latter, the error that your reviewer found most painful was that which disguised the synopsis of "Genus Homo" by de Camp and Miller, by the title of "The Incomplete Enchanter", by de Camp and Pratt. ("The Incomplete Enchanter" is also epitomized under its proper title.)

SPEAKING of monuments like Dighton Rock, as I did at the beginning of this review, the "most famous monuments in the world" are the pyramids of Egypt, and specifically the three pyramids of the fourth-dynasty kings Khufu, Khafra, and Menkaura at Giza. (About eighty pyramids were built together, but many of these are now mere heaps of rubble.) I have discussed the pseudo-scientific cults and theories attached to these monuments in Bob's magazines. Now, if you really want to know what *is* known about the pyramids, without prophetic or occult rubbish, the book for you is I. E. S. Edwards' "The Pyramids of Egypt" (Harmondworth, Middlesex, England: Penguin-Pelican Books, 1947-52, 256 pp., paper). The British price is half a crown, but the American price I don't know because I haven't received my bill from Ken Slater.

The author is an archeologist for the British Museum who has visited all the pyramids himself, and has dug at some of them. Here are the facts: size, shape, orientation, kinds of rock, methods of construction, changes in the builders' plans, accessory structures (originally very elaborate), robbery and delapidation, religious symbolism, and so forth. The work is amply illustrated by half-tones, drawings, and diagrams. Edwards barely alludes to the occult pyramidological theories, but others have told of these. There are an ample bibliography and index. My only criticism is that it ruffles my pedantic fur to see the three above-mentioned kings called by the Latinized Greek corruptions of their names: Cheops, etc.

Believing that, to science-fiction readers, the nature, history, and relationships of science and its practitioners are of interest, I have reviewed several books dealing with these subjects. This study might be called the "science of science." For a convenient word

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to describe this study, "scientology" springs to mind, but my colleague L. Ron Hubbard has preempted it in quite a different sense. My big Webster's gives "scientism" as meaning "the methods, mental attitude, doctrines etc. of men skilled in science," which comes close. We now have a first-class book on scientism: "The Making of a Scientist", by Anne Roe (N. Y.: Dodd, Mead & Co., 1953, xi + 244 pp., $3.75, no index).

Dr. Roe is a clinical psychologist, who has performed research on projects such as the relation of alcoholism to art; she is also the wife of Dr George Gaylord Simpson, the fox-bearded paleontologist of the American Museum of Natural History. This book reports a study of sixty-four of the most eminent native-born scientists now researching in the United States, between the ages of 31 and 61. She travelled about the country interviewing her subjects and giving them tests. The book is written in a chatty, informal, and feminine, but amusing and readable, style.

Dr. Roe's subjects comprised twenty biologists, twenty-two physical scientists (ten experimental and twelve theoretical), and twenty-two social scientists (fourteen psychologists and eigh anthopologists).

As one would expect, these scientists are an extremely intelligent group of people. Dr. Roe's main difficulty in giving them mental tests was in making the tests hard enough to have a ceiling. Her physicists simply breezed through a mathematical test that would have floored most educated people. They are all good citizens—but, except in the case of a few social scientists, altruism or love of humanity plays a negligible part in their motivation. The driving force in making them scientists is mainly the fact that, in this way, they can get paid for doing what they most like to do. When she asked them how they spent their spare time, their answer was usually "What spare time?" and when she asked about their favorite recreation or amusement, the answer was "My work, of course!"

A disproportionately-large number of them come from professional-class homes, but within this frame there is no special tendency to follow the father's particular line. The operative factor seems to be that in professional homes (be they the homes of doctors, lawyers, clergymen, writers, or scientists) learning is valued for its own sake. A disproportionately-large number were eldest or only children, as this position seems to encourage the development of personal independence and self-reliance.

Many were early thrown on their own resources by the death of a parent, or a bodily weakness. Most were avid readers from an early age; most of them liked school. The event that confirmed them in their scientific vocation was nearly always the discovery that they, too, could do research and learn new facts.

They all think most of the time and are impelled by an intense drive. Though most send their children to Sunday-school, they do so as a matter of perfunctory compliance with tribal custom, as a large majority are non-religious, or anti-religious, and only three of them were religious to the

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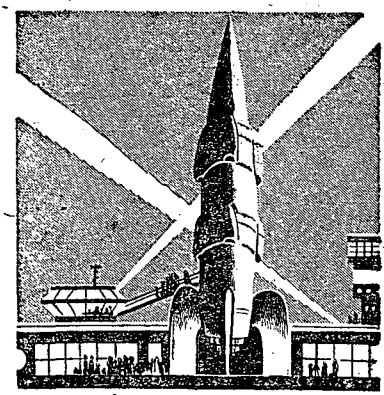
point of being active in their respective churches.

They differ markedly according to the kind of scientist. In some respects the theoretical and experimental physical scientists differed more from each other than either differed from the other groups. The biologists and physical scientists were mostly solitary introverts when young, and have remained uninterested in and uneasy with people; the social scientists were, and are, gregarious and active in social life and the pursuit of the other sex. On the other hand, biologists and phsyical scientists are excellent marital risks, divorces among them being 15% and 5% respectively, while among the social scientists 41% had been divorced at least once—which must put them almost in a class with theatrical people. The social scientists are apt to be constantly involved in tense, emotional relationships with people, while those of the other classes serenely ignore their fellow-men, regarding them as organisms which can be tolerated as long as they do not interfere with the scientists' work.



THERE ARE also books—good, bad, and indifferent—that summarize late developments in science. The best of these in a long time is "Scientific American Reader" (N. Y.: Simon & Schuster, 1953, xiv + 626 pp., $6.00). This is a symposium edited by the editors of the *Scientific American*, containing fifty-seven articles that have appeared in that magazine since 1948, with notes to bring them up to date, and many diagrams.

The articles are grouped in twelve "Chapters" each containing three to six pieces. Nearly all are by scientists working in the fields they describe. The chapters are called "Evolution in Space," "Structure of the Earth," "Structure of Matter," "Atomic Energy," "Origin of Life," "Genetics," "The Virus," "Stress," "Animal Behavior," "Origin of Man," "The Brain and the Machine," and "Sensation and Perception." I found of special interest:

(1) Baade's discovery that the stars, instead of comprising a single graded population, fall into two quite distinct ones, one type occurring more commonly in the nucleus of galaxies and the other in the arms. The likeliest explanation of their differences is that one type contains more metal than the other.

(2) The recent work by Ewing in exploring the ocean floor with instruments, which seems to have eliminated for good Wegener's hypothesis of continental drift.

(3) The appalling multiplication of sub-atomic particles. A ta-

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ble shows nineteen, divided into fermions and bosons. (Read the book to find out what *they* are.)

(4) The story of Kuehne, who developed and fixed a picture on the retina of an eye in the head of a man just after this head had been cut off.

(5) The near-solution of the vexed problem of the origin of corn.

(6) The army-ants who get to walking in a circle and walk themselves to death.

(7) The behavior of cats artificially made neurotic in the lab, and the causes of hostility among them.

(8) The discovery of Charente (or Fontechevade) man by Mlle. Henri-Martin, which puts *Homo sapiens* back before *H. neanderthalensis.*

★

Rosie Lived In A Bubble

[*Continued From Page* 78]

their resources and the population they could maintain. He collected and codified all laws, published a Master Law; he quickly became an effective, if benevolent dictator.

In a salute to old custom, Henry, Jr. and Mary gathered their parents and friends and read to each other an ancient marriage vow. Rosie and Tessie, now being related by marriage, became reconciled with one another.

Their grandchildren too were freakish. The freakishness—which had come to be a sign of superiority—appeared in several of their great-grandchildren. As the original mothers of the bee-eyed-prone strain, Rosie and Tessie were greatly respected and almost revered. They lived with Henry, Sr. and Frank on a terrace in the Riviera, where Henry, Sr. died of old age and Frank died of the finest wines.

The skinny old woman and the fat old woman talked many hours about the exploits of their descendants. Already, bee-eyes had been the first to look through the port of a space-helmet at his own armored feet standing on the Moon.

And often they talked about old days in the Bubble. But they had been respectably brought up; neither of them ever mentioned Tora Pannidev. His name, therefore, does not appear in the archives of the New Earth. Whether or not he planned to leave behind him the much-needed gift of genius is, therefore, a question that never will be discussed.

★

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"This is your punishment, up to the last generations you will live alone here; you will see nothing but pictures of space and the planets; you will hear nothing but lectures on ships and space navigation; you will know nothing but what a spaceman needs to know. But you will stay where you are, forever; you may never see the stars!"

GUIDE WIRE

by JOE L. HENSLEY

illustrated by ED EMSH

IN *THE beginning*:

There were fences, miles of them, with electric strands cunningly concealed at the tops. And inside there were men in old drab uniforms and more fences and gates that said: *No Admittance,* and, *Have Your Pass Ready,* and, *Restricted Area.*

There was the ship.

It was not a big ship. The huge launching tower almost dwarfed it.

A thin, stooped Air Force Captain stood beside the ship on a cold September morning. A voice in his earphones said: *"Zero minus fifteen."*

He climbed up the long ladder; he took a long last look at the desert land and the mountains in the distance. To the right, a few miles away, he could see the huge, gouged hole, where another base had been when the war came. He closed the porthole and screwed it down tight.

"Zero minus ten."

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He strapped himself in the recoil seat and checked the instruments.

"Zero minus five."

Outside the ship, in deep fortifications in the earth, specialists and technicians waited.

"Sixty seconds—fifty-nine."

"Two—one."

White flame assaulted the desert floor and the great ship began to move. It freed itself from the tower.

A radar clicked in an underground room.

Inside the ship the pull of gravity tore at the Captain, and then it lessened and he could move his arms. He pulled the shield release and it slid away from the thick glass in front of him. He saw the stars.

And already it had begun to happen. Somewhere in his small, ill-formed body, a chemical change took place. He could feel a limpness, a lethargy, spreading over him.

He reached a red-splotched hand toward the switch labeled: *Dead Man.* He pulled it.

Deep in the earth below, a light flashed red on an instrument-panel and men looked at it and felt their throats catch.

"What is it?" a bent, one armed General asked.

"He pulled the 'deadman'!"

The ship began to slow on forward rockets as it came sliding back through the curtain of atmosphere. The hull glowed red and the black paint letters on the nose charred off.

They brought it back down.

THE VOICE said again, for the twentieth time that day, and for the thousandth time that year, "Your name is Bill Jones."

"My name is Bill Jones," the boy answered. He was perhaps eighteen and his only clothing was a pair of thin white shorts. He added under his breath: "So what?"

"Now there will be a movie," the voice said. "You may go to the window and ask Carol Smith if she would care to watch it with you."

Bill Jones went to the window. It was a surprise, for they were not often allowed together. He could see her through the heavy, cracked glass. He tapped on the glass. "Carol—a movie. It says you can come."

She nodded. She wore the same kind of shorts he had on, and a thin halter.

A leaded door slid back. She came through and he took her hand. They were about the same age, both of them very tall and strongly formed; the lights dimmed in the dingy, cell-like room.

The movie was about space, as

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usual. But this one was better than the usual run; it was about a colonist on Venus, and his trials and tribulations as he tried to win the girl of the village leader.

Bill and Carol practiced the hand alphabet throughout the dark scenes. They had long since found that there were microphones capable of picking up even the slightest whisper over the roar of the sound track of the movies. And there was punishment for trying to talk.

"I am working on a plan," he tapped to her.

"Anything," she tapped emphatically.

He tapped a little of the plan to her.

The lights came back on at the end of the movie. The voice said: *"I detected laxity in watching. Your punishment will be one burst of steam for each of you."*

A thin hose wavered down from the ceiling. They sat still, knowing from long experience that it was better not to run. A burst of scalding steam puffed from the end of the hose at Bill's legs, doubling him up in pain. Another burst struck Carol.

"You may return to your room now, Carol Smith."

Obediently she arose and went back through the sliding, heavy door. It slid shut on noisy hinges behind her.

"Ten o'clock—time for the story," the voice said. There was a pause. Then came another voice and the scratching of a much used record: *"This is the story of Morgan Jones and Samuel Smith, who, with their families, refused their duties to the planet, Earth. This story begins in unnatural fear and ends in shame. For, when the great draft law of* 1983 *was passed, requiring every tenth family to make the trip to the planets, Morgan Smith and Samuel Jones refused to go when their families were called."*

Bill Jones listened with half an ear to the story he had heard so many times before.

"There was not sufficient food or sufficient land for all and yet these two families defied the law of the United Nations, in order to keep what they had. Their names were chosen fairly by lot, but they fled the conscription officers. It is significant that they were the only two families chosen who attempted escape. They were labeled deserters and traitors to all of the peoples of United Earth.

"And when they were caught—just punishment was prescribed for them. They were not to be allowed to mingle again with the people they had betrayed. This great prison was constructed, and the punishment is to be inflicted upon them and their descendants forever.

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"No other human shall speak to them. They shall remain here—alone. They shall never see the sun or the light of day.

"They shall never see the stars."

The record switched off, the lights went out and Bill Jones went to the small, hard bed in the corner.

The voice came as it always did: *"You are the last of your family; she is the last of hers."*

And then there was silence.

FOR AS LONG as Bill could remember it had been like this. Always he had been alone, and there had been the voice that talked from the dirty, warped ceiling, and the steam hose that burned when he did not obey or was not quick enough. At a very early age there had been books and after that—movies. And all of them had been about Space in one way or another. There had been magazines with stories and articles about space and the other planets. Even the games and the cards he was given to play with were connected with space.

He slept.

At night he dreamed of it... He and Carol, hand in hand, ran from a pursuing mob. They ran and ran. And then they were climbing up a high ladder and the first ones of the chasers were close behind. He clanged the steel door in the half-mad face of the first pursuer. Then they were in the acceleration seats of a great ship and he was pushing the studs as the games had taught him. There was a burst of flame and he heard the hideous screaming as they climbed away. And he saw the stars. In the dream the stars were always very plain—great knobs of light that drew the soul and strength out of him. And he headed out there to the great unknown; the leaded walls, and the voice of hate, were left far behind.

IN THE MORNING there was the loud ringing of the "awaken" bell. He jumped quickly out of bed, knowing that slowness would be punished by the steam hose.

A small opening in the wall widened and a set of steel hands came through, holding a rusty pan of warm water. He washed in it quickly. The pan was pulled back and a tray of food was offered. He ate. Then another smaller pan of water and a comb and toothbrush.

A paper came through and he read it. It was full of news from other planets. All of the comic strips had to do with children, or grown-ups, or animals, on other worlds. New Chicago was leading the Interplanetary League in baseball, the sports page reported.

"Today," the voice said, *"you*

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will learn to navigate the new Stearns type cruiser." A chair came down from the ceiling and an instrument-board followed. A table with paper and pencil attached for figuring appeared.

Bill felt a vague unease. He had been learning how to navigate the Stearns type cruiser for a long time now—much longer than he was usually instructed on one particular thing.

"*Take these co-ordinates,*" the machine said, and rattled off a set of numbers. "*Where are you?*"

Bill figured. "On the Venus run, third parabola."

Another set of figures was given—and another. Once he was slow, and a burst of steam scalded his legs.

Finally it was done and the table, instrument board and chairs were pulled back up into the ceiling and the cover for them clanked open and shut.

"*This afternoon,*" the voice said, "*there will be a lecture on the stars.*"

Bill felt a moment of blind, unreasoning anger at the endless repetition. It helped. He looked at the ceiling and let the fury carry him away: "To hell with the stars!" he yelled defiantly.

The little steam hose snaked down and he danced away from it. It twisted with him, following his legs, puffing steam. He caught the end in his hands and tied a loop in the end of it, knowing that more punishment would come and hoping for it. A heavier hose came out of the ceiling and a stream of water, under extreme pressure, knocked him back and slid him against the cracked, dirty walls. It buffeted him along the walls, crushing the breath away, making him gag and spit as he swallowed it. The water changed in temperature. It had been like ice—now he could see the steam rising from it as it poured off him and the heat of it turned his body an angry red.

Finally the hose was retracted and he lay limp, but still defiant on the floor. He could see Carol looking at him from the window between the rooms, her face frightened.

"*This afternoon,*" the voice said again, "*there will be a lecture on the stars.*"

"Why?" Bill asked softly, making no move to get up. For a moment there was silence and he half-expected to see the hoses come down again.

"*It is a part of the punishment,*" the voice said.

BILL WAS a model prisoner for the next three days. Then there was another movie, and he was allowed to have Carol come in for it.

"*Was the opening that the big*

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hose came through large enough?" he tapped to her when the lights were out and the movie was on.

"No," she tapped back, *"but I could see light above it."*

Bill felt a deep despair, but he did not let his body or face show it. *"We'll try it anyway—tomorrow—or the first time possible."*

"All right," she tapped back and squeezed his hand tightly.

The lights came on and they were given the customary burst of steam as punishment for inattentiveness.

That night, after the lights had gone out, Bill lay in bed thinking for a long time. Once, long ago, he remembered a day when the voice had not talked to him. There had been no mechanical hands with breakfast, there had been no steam hose. The door between the rooms had slipped open when he tugged at it, and he and the girl had played and talked with no punishment from whatever was above the ceiling. Now, thinking about it, he knew that some cog in the machinery had broken down; a fuse had blown, or the power had gone out.

He had been taught the basic work in chemistry and physics and he had reasoned long ago that whatever was above was not human; it was some kind of a complex machine. Sometimes at nights, after the lights were out, he could hear it whirring and clicking above him, but tonight the room above seemed still.

After a long time he went to sleep and dreamed again the dream of escape.

In the morning he awoke and was out of bed with the alarm bell. There was no sense in taking a chance in being crippled by the steam hose before that chance was necessary.

He read the morning paper, keeping his body and mind as untensed as possible. He knew from past experience that it could see his body reactions and read them as well as it could understand what he said to it.

"This morning," the voice said, *"there will be another lesson on the navigation of the Stearns type cruiser."*

The instrument board came down, followed by the chair and figuring table. There were red, winking lights and power gauges on the instrument board and he saw the thickly insulated cable that led from it up to the ceiling. He forced himself to go slowly to the chair.

"Take these co-ordinates."

Bill wrote them down. He let his left hand dangle off the table near the instrument board.

"Where are you?"

Now, Bill thought. *Now!* He let his body go limp and then

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tense and he dived at the heavy wire. He got his hands around it and tugged even as the hoses came through the ceiling. He jerked the wire away from its connection and pressed it against the instrument board, shoving the crackling terminals together. The steam from the small hose burned his back, and a heavy spurt of water caught him. For a moment he thought he had failed; then the lights went out and the prayed-for darkness came. There was a small explosion from above. The steam hose hung limply as he brushed against it.

THE DOOR to Carol's room slid open easily when he touched it, now that the power which had held it shut was off. She was waiting.

"I'm going up the hose," he

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said. "I'll see if I can't pry a part of the ceiling out."

He took the chair that the machine had handed down and smashed it against the floor. He stuck a short, heavy back-piece in his waistband. He began to climb.

The ceiling was dark now that the lights were out, and the only light was the slight brightness that came down through the hole. It was bigger than it needed to be, probably because the hose had to swivel around. He reached the top of the hose. Hanging on with one hand and his legs he stuck the stick in the hole and began to pry. There was an open space in between. A few hard tugs and a rounded piece of grimy metal fell out of the bottom of the steam hole. The steam from the dripping hose had rusted its bolts away. Now there was room to get his whole hand in the hole; he jabbed the stick upward and pushed hard.

A whole piece of the cracked, warped metal ceiling lifted out. There was light.

Grimly he lifted himself through the hole. He was in a room—there was a grimy window in one corner of it. The light came from it.

There was a door.

The girl was already lifting her head above the level of the floor; he caught her outstretched hand.

Silently they went to the window. The light came from a huge ball of flame, low on the distant horizon. Neither of them had ever seen it before, but both knew what it was; it was the sun.

Bill systematically smashed the gauges and instruments that paneled the walls of the room; then he jerked the door open. There was a flight of steps, running down. There was a huge machine at the bottom, silent now. There was another flight of steps running up and another door. And the light beyond was the light of the sun.

They went down the steps hand in hand.

"Wait!" he said at the bottom.

He went to the great machine and pulled the wires leading into it out. He broke all of the instruments with the heavy stick. Then he led the girl up the stairs and pulled the door open.

THERE HAS been an escape from Number 23. According to the plan the escapees will be driven toward Bartlettsville. A ship is being readied there.

Now it seemed like only another building as they ran. The trees were dead around it and the outside was brick and shabby and not at all like the buildings that Bill had seen pictured in the newspapers and books. It was surrounded by a wooded section and there was no fence. The only sign was plant-

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ed directly in front of the door. It said: *"Smith-Jones No. 23—Keep Out."*

It had been too easy; Bill knew that—but perhaps the world had forgotten. And yet, the sign seemed freshly painted. But there wasn't time to worry and puzzle about it now.

For a long time they ran, and it seemed to Bill that the strength rose within him and he could run forever. The weather outside was warm and the sun beat down through the green trees around them. Then, through the trees, they saw a field and a stooped, wizened farmer walking through it. They lay on the ground, hiding, though Bill knew that the farmer could not have seen them through the sheltering weeds and trees.

And suddenly, from far away, there came the sound of a siren, cutting the air behind them. Bill saw the farmer begin to hobble toward a distant house.

"Come on," he said to Carol. "I think that alarm is for us."

They ran on, until the sound of the siren died in the distance behind them. The trees began to thin out and several times they crossed dirt roads.

They came at last to the edge of a clearing. Bill could hear the girl breathing hard beside him and his own heart pounded. Suddenly the land around him seemed like a nightmare and he had a desire for the machine that fed and ordered. He fought it off resentfully.

"Let's rest a minute," the girl said.

They lay down behind the last of the friendly trees. Overhead, Bill could hear the chirping of excited birds and it gave him the feeling that even they were afraid of himself and the girl.

He heard a sound in the clearing beyond. He put his hand on the girl's shoulder to caution her. Then he edged carefully forward and looked around the bole of the tree. There were men in the clearing, a whole ragged line of them, spread out and moving toward the woods. The searchers had the appearance of sick men. Some of them were crippled; some of them were bent. But all of them had guns, and it seemed to Bill that they were looking straight at him.

He lay quietly watching for a moment and then slipped back, heart pounding with fear. "There are men out there," he whispered to the girl. "They are coming toward us; lie very still."

The tree they were behind was in a small depression. If they were lucky and one of the advancers didn't come directly for it they might escape unseen.

The men passed so near that Bill could hear the sound of their

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breathing; but no one raised a shout of alarm.

Bill waited for ten minutes after the last crackling footstep had faded away. Then he pulled the girl to her feet and together they ran across the clearing.

THE PRISONERS have been sighted to the South of Bartlettsville.

All day they ran and rested and then ran again. Several times they barely evaded detection by little bands of far-off men. In the late afternoon they came on a broad, smooth road and Bill followed it for a long time, staying in the underbrush to the sides of it and only kneeling down when one of the two-wheeled cars came past. The road was heavily traveled and Bill eventually moved away from it because it was slowing their progress.

And at last it was dark.

"I'm hungry," Carol said; "let's try to find some berries or nuts."

"In the morning," Bill told her. "Now, let's sleep. If we go crackling around now, and someone hears us, we'll get caught; they'll have lights and can see us while we can't see them."

He saw her nod in the darkness and he swallowed again at the emptiness in his own stomach.

"Bill," she said softly, "what are we going to do?"

He thought about it for a moment. "Try to find a spaceport somewhere, and maybe steal a ship there. If we can get off this planet, maybe we'll be able to find one where they're aren't any people. Even if we can't find one like that—on the other planets they've probably forgotten who the Smiths and the Joneses are. We'd be comparatively safe out there."

He pointed at the sky: "And there are the stars; they said we'd never see them."

He felt her hand slide into his and together they looked up at the sky until the urge to sleep overwhelmed them.

IN THE MORNING, when he awoke, the girl's head was pillowed on his arm and he lay silently for a long time so as not to awaken her. Twice he thought he heard the underbrush crackle far away. At last the feeling that the pursuers were close became more than vague fear and he touched the girl on the shoulder to awaken her.

She awoke quickly, eyes clear and alert.

"We're on the edge of some town," he said. "I can hear cars moving over that hill and a little while ago I heard what sounded like factory whistles." He touched her hand. "Wait here— I'll see if I can find something to eat."

He reconnoitered the area, slip-

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ping silently to the top of the hill. There was a town beyond, a fairly large one. And to the North of them, on the other side of the town, he saw a flash of silver as a jet plane descended. A landing-field might also mean there were rockets. He strained his eyes against the sun watching, but no other ships landed.

The woods were alive with patches of half ripe berries.

After they had eaten, they searched together until they came on a small, clear stream and together they drank.

"We're going to circle the town below. There's a field on the other side. If we can't find a ship there maybe we can steal a jetplane," he told her.

By noon they had advanced halfway around the city. Once they had to cross a wide, heavily-traveled road and they had to wait for almost an hour until the road was clear of traffic. And once, too, they came on a line of men moving away from them and lay silently until they were only tiny figures far away. Once again Bill's heart came jumping into his throat and he longed for the security of the cell.

By darkness they were on the edge of the field.

THEY HAVE arrived. All temporary militia units will withdraw.

"It was too easy," Bill kept saying, when the ship was off the ground and the acceleration of that first savage thrust had eased. "They didn't have the ship or the airport guarded—they must have known that we would head for something like this."

"And the ship is all stocked too," Carol said.

Bill pulled the shield release and it slid away from the heavy glass. Outside the stars reeled.

"They're beautiful," Carol said softly and took his hand.

"GOOD EVENING, people of the United Nations. This is your U. N. reporter, Jules Irvino, and I am speaking to you tonight from the tower at the Bartlettsville Air Base.

"That flash of crimson you saw just now on your television screens was the latest of the Smith-Jones prisoners escaping in a new Stearns type cruiser, brought here especially from the closed depot at White Sands.

"In a few moments our camera and audio will switch you to a hidden circuit aboard that ship up there and you will see and hear a space-trip—probably to Venus.

"But, before that, a brief summing up: Man has known for the last 100 years that he cannot go into space in his present physical condition. The ten ships of the early 1980's, and the sporadic later

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suicidal efforts—the last of which came only a few years ago—have proved that.

"In a way, it could be said that we did it to ourselves—for the war of the 1960's and 70's sapped our strength as a people, while uniting us as a world. The total war of bombs, and germs, and radiation-materials, and the long years underground have made us unstable physically and mentally. We have acquired a race allergy to any type of increased radiation and our bones, muscles, and organs cannot stand the impact of acceleration.

"We are become a people of wheelchairs and dreams.

"And yet, occasionally, there is born among us a perfect, such as those two out there. One who is immune to all our diseases and allergies. Scientists have said they are mutations, and we have made that an ugly word among us.

"But we have found nothing to fear in those out there. For, you see, the spirit is not theirs. Nature compensates for the perfect bodies by taking away their urge to push and win.

"And so—the training that you have seen described in your magazines and on your T. V. screens. It has not been completely successful, but it is a starting point. It consists of teaching them about space, and then withdrawing the hope of space from them. Our scientists and machines make space the only real things in their lives—the only place that they may live in safety, and, at the same time, the only thing that they may not have. We make escape fairly difficult, for they would never be able to survive the rigors of a new planet if they could not plan successfully. Many pairs, older than the ones tonight, have never escaped, have never tried to escape.

"And so we fulfill two aims. First, we make the lives of those people out there in that spaceship worth living and take away the danger to society that their neuroticism brings. But most important—we go to the stars, if only by proxy.

"The calculating-machine has quoted a 92 per-cent probability that this pair will head for Venus, which they believe to be an occupied, but still frontier world.

"I know that many of you would give your souls to be out there tonight in that ship. I know also that I would trade not only my soul, but this wheelchair I sit in, for the chance to see those stars. . .

"My engineer has just signaled me that they are ready back in the main studios. We switch you back there now.

"Goodnight!"

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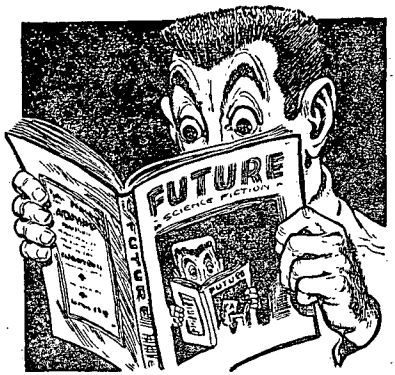

INSIDE SCIENCE FICTION

Reports and Reminiscences

By ROBERT A. MADLE

SCIENCE FICTION SPOTLIGHT

LOS ANGELES Science-Fantasy Society: In April, 1934, Hugo Gernsback announced the formation of the Science Fiction League in his publication, *Wonder Stories*. Gernsback, realizing that science fiction fans were (and are still) imbued with missionary zeal, emphatically stressed the organization of local chapters of the League. One of the first to respond, was E. C. Reynolds, who volunteered to form the Los Angeles Science Fiction League.

A period of several months elapsed before Mr. Reynolds obtained sufficient applications, and the first meeting of the LASFL was held October 27th, 1934. The LASFL was chartered as Chapter 4 (Brooklyn, N.Y., Lewiston, Idaho, and Erie, Pa. were the first three chapters) and is the oldest science fiction club operating today. Soon after its birth, the name of the club was changed to the Los Angeles Science-Fantasy Society.

Of the original members only William S. Hofford is still affiliated with the LASFS (and Hofford just returned after an absence of a dozen years). Soon after the club's inception, Forrest J. Acker-

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man moved to LA and has been, without a doubt, the most dynamic member of the LASFS. He has held every office, at one time or another, and has missed only thirty of the approximate 850 meetings held since 1934. Other early members still active are Walter J. Daugherty, Russell J. Hodgkins, and E. Everett Evans. Another man whose name was associated with the LASFS for many years is Ray Bradbury. Ray's first story, "Hollerbochen's Dilemma," appeared in the LASFS publication, *Imagination*. Bradbury still makes an occasional appearance at LASFS meetings.

The LASFS, being located in one of the largest cities in the country, has always boasted a formidable membership, replete with big names. Among the s-f celebrities who have attended meetings are "Skylark" Smith, Robert A. Heinlein, A. E. van Vogt, Henry Kuttner, C. L. Moore, David H. Keller, C. M. Kornbluth, Edmond Hamilton, Jack Williamson, Willy Ley, and dozens of others. The greatest turnout was sixty-eight to greet the pride of the Philadelphia Science Fiction Society, L. Sprague de Camp.

Many members of the LASFS have become professional authors, through club inspiration: L. Major Reynolds, E. Everett Evans, Albert Hernhuter and Arthur J. Cox are among this group. In addition to literary inspiration, the activities of the LASFS include the publication of its offical organ, *Shangri-La;* the annual honor-banquet for its most successful fan-turned-pro-of-the-year; and the housing of a huge lending-library of s-f books and magazines. The clubroom is named Freehafer Hall, in memory of Paul Freehafer—one of the club's most active members during the late 30's and early 40's, whose untimely death shocked the fan world of that period. The walls of the clubroom are ornamented by originals by Finlay, Paul, Bok, Lawrence, Wesso, and other renowned fantasy artists.

At the present time, the Director is sensational cover-artist, Mel Hunter; Thelma Hamm, well-known pro, is Secretary. Anyone in the Los Angeles Area is cordially invited to visit the clubroom, which is located in the Prince Rupert Apartments, 1305 Ingraham, any Thursday evening. Further information may be obtained by writing to the address mentioned above.

Carolina Science Fiction Society: Whereas the Los Angeles Science-Fantasy Society is the oldest science fiction club extant, the squalling infant in the field is the Carolina Science Fiction Society. Organized by (we blushingly admit) Robert A. Madle, the initial meeting was held January 15th. Early meetings have been concerned with discussion and evaluation of the general field, and the gatherings have been on a rather informal basis.

Thanks to newspaper publicity the club's membership has expanded rapidly. Both Charlotte papers have devoted space to the organization, with the *Charlotte News* publishing a second-section front-page article featuring the club, its organizer, and the field in general. Other members of the CSFS are Ned Reece of Kannapolis; Wilkie Conner of Gastonia; and a half-dozen from Charlotte.

At its present rate of progress

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the CSFS bids fair to become one of the leading s-f groups in the nation. Anyone in the Charlotte area interested in s-f should communicate with the club Secretary, Martin Klein, 2513 Vail Avenue, Charlotte, N.C. Complete membership details will be immediately forthcoming.

Philadelphia Science Fiction Society: The PSFS, the world's second-oldest s-f club, has started off the New Year with a bang by electing an extremely progressive slate of officers. The new President is the very popular writer, Alan E. Nourse; Lyle Kessler, publisher of one of the leading fanzines, *Fanwarp*, is Secretary; Will Jenkins and Marvin Edwards, loyal and hardworking members, are Vice-President and Treasurer, respectively.

Lyle Kessler informs us that they intend to make the PSFS the biggest and best s-f club in the world. This appears to be quite possible, inasmuch as the club is one of the largest at present and numbers among its members such fans and writers as L. Sprague de Camp, Milton Rothman, Tom Clareson, Jack Agnew and Oswald Train.

Anyone interested in attending a meeting of the PSFS is invited to write to the Secretary, 2450-76 Avenue, Philadelphia 38, Pa., for details.

THE FAN PRESS

IN EARLY 1946 the first issue of a "different" fan magazine appeared. Mimeographed, it contained nothing but advertisements of s-f books and magazines; it was titled, accordingly *Fantasy Advertiser*. Now eight years old, the magazine has changed vastly: its original editor is no longer on the scene; it is beautifully printed via the photo-offset process, and is now titled, *Science-Fiction Advertiser*. The current issue, in addition to being replete with s-f ads of every description, contains a brilliant article by Arthur J. Cox in which he explains the difference between ordinary fiction and fantasy fiction. Cox convincingly displays "external motivation" as opposed to "relationships existing between the characters" as the primary difference between mundane and supramundane literature. The editor reviews most of the new books in a professional manner, and Morris S. Dollens does some magnificent artwork. SFA costs 20¢ per copy from Roy A. Squires, 1745 Kenneth Road, Glendale 1, California.

A brand new addition to the field is *Fie* (15¢ from Harry Calnek, Granville Ferry, Nova Scotia, Canada). *Fie* is excellently mimeographed and its initial issue compares favorably with some of the leaders in the field. Joe Keogh has what appears to be a regular column, "Zenith & Nadir," in which various elements of the s-f field are discussed. Keogh also writes "Origins of Galactic Superstition," inspired by Edward Wellen's *Galaxy* articles. There are other fine items by Carol McKinney, Daryl Sharp, and a few others. *Fie* is off to a good start, and is recommended without qualification.

If you like humor intermingled in your fanzine perusing you'll drool over *Grue* (15¢ from Dean A. Grennell, 402 Maple Avenue, Fond Du Lac, Wisconsin). *Grue* is reproduced in several colors on

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the Rex-O-Graph, a Ditto-like process, and is one of the most colorful of fanzines—both literally and figuratively. Most of the contents is written by the magazine's versatile editor who, as we mentioned in a previous column, is one of fandom's finest writers. In "As If We Needed Another Mystery Man" Grennell attempts to uncover the identity of David Grinnell (author of "Road to Rome," "Last Stand of a Space Grenadier"). Eric Frank Russell deplores the repeated anthologization of many stories, and Jack Harness writes a very "punny" column. *Grue* is anything but serious, and in bold type on the front cover says, *"Caveat Lector!"*—Let the Buyer Beware!

Infinity is another recent comer, which has already forged to the foreground of the ubiqutious fanzine field. *Infinity's* iridescent appearance is the result of the best mimeograph-hektograph combination we've yet seen. In issue #2, Harlan Ellison deplores the saturation of the professional magazine field, and Cal Beck asks, "What's Wrong With the Worldcon?" There are, as Beck indicates, many aspects of the World Convention which could be improved, but we do not agree that the answer is to have several conventions in different sections of the nation. "The Waiting" is an unusual short-short by Algis Budrys, and there are other above-average items in the magazine's thirty large pages. This one costs 15¢ and is obtainable from Charles Harris, 85 Fairview Avenue, Great Neck, New York.

Now in its fifth year, *Spaceship* is a serious "quarterly review of science fiction." (15¢ from Bob Silverberg, 760 Montgomery Street, Brooklyn 13, New York.) The principal item of the issue we have on hand is the editor's detailed and well thought-out article, "1953 in Review." Silverberg reviews the entire professional field (magazines, books, and fanzines) for the past year and, in addition, prints a checklist of 1953 U.S. magazines. There were 39 titles and 182 issues! No wonder everyone is behind on his reading! Among the other items are Redd Boggs' fine column, "File 13," and Terry Carr's review of Weinbaum's "The Red Peri." Readers unacquainted with the fanzine field (as well as those who are) will find *Spaceship* highly entertaining.

Another of the non-serious fanzines which we enjoy immensely is *Psychotic* (10¢ from Richard E. Geis, 2631 N. Mississippi, Apt. 106, Portland 12, Oregon). In "The Padded Cell" this time Vernon L. McCain offers advice to fanzine publishers; in "The Observation Ward" the editor reviews fanzines; and in "Section 8" the readers review *Psychotic.* The editor also discusses "The War of the Worlds" (film-version) and is not overly-enthusiastic about the love and religious aspects of the picture.

Please note new address: send all fanzines for review to Robert A. Madle, 1620 Anderson Street, Charlotte, North Carolina.

TWENTY YEARS AGO IN SCIENCE FICTION

THE JUNE, 1934 *Astounding Stories* was similar to the preceding five issues, in that practically every story was written by the biggest names of the era. F.

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Orlin Tremaine exuded enthusiasm and inspiration in his monthly pep-talk, as follows: "I have asked each of you to interest one new reader in our magazine... Now I'm asking you again... I am deadly serious about asking you to help me to help our magazine hold the pace it is setting..." Like Gernsback, Tremaine was appealing to the missionary zeal of s-f readers. And *Astounding's* circulation did rise rapidly; it rose to such an extent that, at times in 1934 and 1935, Tremaine was seriously considering semi-monthly publication!

Brown's cover illustrated Frank K. Kelly's well-done novelet of the early years of space travel, "Crater 17, Near Tycho." There was also the usual thought-variant. This time it was Murray Leinster's renowned tale of a time-upheaval in which the various ages of the earth became intermingled, "Sidewise in Time." Leinster explained the shiftings of the time-paths by having one "closed space" come close to the "closed space" in which our universe is situated. (Both closed spaces are parts of "hyper-space.") Just as a star coming close to our solar system would disrupt the system, so would a closed space approaching another closed space cause shiftings of the time-paths. This was considered one of the best stories of 1934.

Jack Williamson's classic novel, "The Legion of Space," continued along its cosmic way; installment 3 of Charles Fort's "Lo!" was printed; and there were short stories of varying merit by Paul Ernst, John Russell Fearn, Henry J. Kostkos, Raymond Z. Gallun, and Harl Vincent. A stellar line-up indeed! Brown, Thomson, and Dold illustrated the issue, which contained 160 pulp-size pages.

John Russell Fearn's thought-variant novelette, "Before Earth Came," copped the cover on the July, 1934 *Astounding Stories*. Brown did a masterful job, and Fearn's conception of the creation of our sun and solar system are recalled with a nostalgic thrill. Fearn showed our ancestors of millions of years ago inhabiting an artificial planet. They realized the planet was doomed, and scientifically created our sun and planets—at the same time implanting protoplasm on planet three. When the artificial world exploded, the segments of it assumed an orbit in the solar system its scientists had created—the asteroids.

A strange little story was "Dr. Lu-Mie" by Clifton B. Kruse. This told of a termite grown to the size of a man and sent to learn the ways of men. Arthur Leo Zagat wrote "The Spoor of the Bat," a rip-roaring interplanetary-pirate yarn and there were short stories by Donald Wandrei, Stanton A. Coblentz, David O. Woodbury, and Howard W. Graham, Ph. D. (Howard Wandrei). Williamson and Fort continued their serials and Dold, Marchioni, and Brown illustrated. Among the letter-writers were Milton A. Rothman, Donald A. Wollheim, and Robert W. Lowndes.

Frank R. Paul's colorful cover on the June, 1934 *Wonder Stories* depicted a scene from Kaye Raymond's atomic-world novelette, "Into the Infinitesimal." The story is all-but-forgotten, but not so David H. Keller's short, "The Doorbell." This was a strange tale of revenge in which an electro-

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magnet, a doorbell, and capsules containing fishhooks were used by the avenger to destroy the men who were responsible for the death of his parents. A capsule was swallowed containing the fishhook; the button of the doorbell was pushed causing the electromagnet to function; and the swallower of the capsule screamed in agony. Keller certainly wrote unusual stories.

The remaining stories were below average this month. John Pierce wrote "Adrift in the Void," a story of the happenings aboard an interplanetary liner which had been struck by a meteor. Part 2 of Friedrich Freska's "Druso" was printed. (Translated from the German by Fletcher Pratt.) Freska told of a group of scientists being placed in suspended animation, and awakening three hundred years hence. They found the earth ruled by insect-beings, from the planet Druso, which had reduced mankind to slaves and barbarians. There were, of course, a few remnants of civilized beings and our protagonist and his friends eventually conquered the Drusonians and controlled the earth and Druso. "The Reader Speaks" contained comments by Bob Tucker, Forrest J. Ackerman, David A. Kyle, and Milton A. Rothman. The Science Fiction League department printed rave comments apropos Gernsback's announcement of the organization and David H. Keller offered original manuscripts to the first ten members. *Wonder* contained 128 pulp-size pages and was illustrated by Schneeman, Winter, and Paul.

Laurence Manning's "Voice of Atlantis," the third in the "Stranger Club" series, was the cover story of *Wonder Stories*, July, 1934, and Paul painted a remarkable cover depicting a city of the far future. Previous stories in this series were "The Call of the Mech-Men" (November, 1933) and "Caverns of Horror" (March, 1934). In this story our hero, by means of a vaguely-described electro-telepathic helmet, communicated with a priest of ancient Atlantis. He was taken on a tour of Atlantis, and Manning utilized his story to satirize contemporary science and civilization. Manning, who apparently was a devout conservationist, stressed the manner in which we are deplenishing the earth's natural resources, and he managed to insert a few barbed digs at the condition of our economy, and how it was permitted to become that way. (We were at the depths of the depression era when this was written.)

The memorable "first" story by Stanley G. Weinbaum, "A Martian Odyssey," was included this time, and future events were to display that editor Charles D. Hornig understated the case when he said: "Our present author...has written a science-fiction tale so new, so breezy, that it stands out head and shoulders over similar interplanetarian stories." Most all contemporary readers of s-f are familiar with this novelet of the first landing on Mars, and the inimitable style in which Weinbaum depicted the bird-like Martian Tweel,

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the Dream Beast, and the Pyramid Being. Here was something new and fresh in science fiction—a story which compares with the most outstanding of today's writings. Weinbaum, with his initial offering, was acclaimed as one of the top writers of the field. Other short stories were by W. L. Sheppard, Jr., and Chester D. Cuthbert.

The opening installment of Eando Binder's "Enslaved Brains" was presented. This was a novel of the scientific utopia of 1973, Unitaria, about which more will be written next time. In the Science Fiction League department, readers enthused over the SFL and member activities were discussed. Paul and Winter illustrated. *Wonder*, despite its lower rate of payment, was holding its own with the fast-moving *Astounding Stories*.

Unfortunately the third entry in the field, *Amazing Stories*, was running far behind its contemporaries; it appeared static and changeless and, although many of the stories were well-written and interesting, the magazine was lacking atmosphere and enthusiasm.

The June issue, as usual, presented a Morey water-color cover, this one illustrating Walter Kately's "Subjugating the Earth." Inhabitants of one of the larger asteroids attempted to conquer the earth, only to fail because of the intrepid earthmen. "Peace Weapons," by Abner J. Gelula, utilized the ingenius idea of creating giant insects as a common enemy against mankind, forcing the various belligerent factions to combine for safety. Part 2 of both "The Lost City," by Milton R. Peril and "Measuring A Meridian," by Jules Verne appeared—along with several very uninspiring shorts. Morey illustrated throughout *Amazing's* 144 pages. Milton A. Rothman, Donald A. Wollheim, and Neil R. Jones held forth in "Discussions."

Buried in the mass of mediocrity printed in *Amazing Stories* for July, 1934, was a glowing example of great science fiction: installment 1 of David H. Keller's classic short novel of the discovery of an elixir of life, "Life Everlasting." Keller told of the invention of The Serum, which removed infirmities of the body and increased the ability of the mind. Everyone in the United States was compelled, by legislation, to take the serum; unfortunately, sterility resulted. People were living in an idealistic utopia, but babies were no longer being born. Keller's answer to the problem will be discussed next time.

Other stories were by George H. Scheer ("Beam Transmission" around which Morey painted the cover), Bob Olsen, Milton R. Peril, and Jules Verne. C. A. Brandt reviewed "Pirates of Venus" and "When Worlds Collide" while Raymond A. Palmer was one of the letter-writers. *Amazing's* artstaff, Leo Morey, penned all of the illustrations.

In the fan world, both *The Fantasy Fan* and *Fantasy Magazine* continued to be published monthly. Both, incidentally, were printed, *at no profit*, by Conrad H. Ruppert. Hornig's *The Fantasy Fan* appealed primarily to the weird fiction enthusiast while *Fantasy Magazine* (Julius Schwartz was now editor, replac-

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Sally didn't want to hurt anyone, but folks had good reason for fearing the child.

ASYLUM

BY ALICE BULLOCK

illustrated by ED EMSH

UNCLE JIM ANDERSON said, "She's the snoopiest darn kid I ever saw." He spat and slowly wiped his mouth with the back of his hand, his eyes puzzled. "I will say for her, she don't seem to embrodiery things none."

"Well, I for one say she's crazy. Vicious. Something ought to be done about her." Mrs. Garton glanced uneasily up the slope toward the schoolhouse. Her eyes picked out the thin, slightly-stooped shoulders of Sally Banim. "She's snoopy all right, and she talks about things it just ain't possible for her to know. She's gonna get folks into more trouble than Bill has now, you mark my words."

"Aw, let the kid alone," Sam Corbett spoke gruffly. "Ain't none of you ever seen her sneaking around where she's got no business have you?" His expression was slightly shamefaced. "I notice everybody always tryin' to trip her up, and ain't nobody done it yet. This camp keeps her bawling half the time, and all she does is tell the truth and shame the devil."

"It ain't right for a kid to spread scandal," Mrs. Garton insisted, "and I for one don't like it." Her knuckles were firmly anchored against her fat hips, ready to fight for her views. Corbett smiled, a

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ready retort seemed to tremble on the tip of his tongue; Mrs. Garton was the worst gossip in camp. Instead he shrugged his shoulders. "If you don't want to know things straight," he said softly, " 'pears to me like you hadn't oughta ask her."

"Well I for one ain't gonna put on kid gloves to handle no snoopy brat," Mrs. Garton snapped at Corbett's back as he pocketed his hands and walked away. "Yeah," Uncle Jim said, and he, too, walked away leaving Mrs. Garton in full possession of the company store steps; she muttered and puffed her way into the store.

Sally, slowly climbing the schoolhouse hill, felt her eyes fill with tears; she knew they were talking about her. She had tried so hard to be like the other kids here. She was different, but she couldn't figure out how.

No matter how hard she tried, she said the wrong things so often —and it made grown people angry, or afraid, or both. When they began to be afraid of her, it didn't take long to begin to hate her. Sally knuckled her eyes, bit her lip and started counting steps as hard as she could. She didn't want to go to an asylum!

Two steps to the big white pebble; ten steps to the juniper bush. She guessed fifty steps to the corner of the schoolhouse coalshed and it took forty-eight. If you

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hopped on one foot did it count one step to a hop or could you count two hops one step? When you shifted your weight to the other leg the free leg could swing twice as far as a hop would go. Once again, nine year old Sally forgot her problems and quietly amused herself, keeping her body and mind busy with the mechanics of counting steps and hops.

SALLY WAS alternately packing and hopping when Miss Trenchard came to the schoolhouse door and called her. Her heart in her throat she walked quietly to where the teacher waited. Miss Trenchard wasn't mad, but Sally wished a little she were.

"Come here Sally. I want to talk to you," Miss Trenchard said.

"Yes ma'am," Sally answered meekly.

"Sally," the teacher sat down in her own chair back of her big desk, "will you answer some questions for me please?" Sally's big green eyes lifted. They were beautiful eyes, fringed with long curling lashes, her only outstanding feature. The rest of her face was thin, cheek bones prominent, chin pointed, a pugged nose sprinkled with freckles, mouth too wide.

Sally looked at the teacher now and began to tremble. "Miss Trenchard," she faltered, "they ast me. Honest they did, and they couldn't get the cage outta the mine if they didn't find Bill. He's the only one that can fix it!"

A look of mixed compassion and incredulity swept over the teacher's face. She had wanted to question Sally about last night, but it astonished her that Sally knew it. She wasn't in the habit of pumping children, though she was curious about the stories that had swept the little coal camp about Sally Banim since the family had moved in, nearly three months ago.

Sally shook even harder. "Don't, Sally!" the teacher begged. "I'm not going to punish you, dear; I just want to know. You were right here in the schoolroom with me until four-thirty last night. That's right, isn't it?"

Sally nodded miserably.

"We—you and I—walked down the hill together. We didn't see Bill; how did you know where he was?"

"You were right there by the porch at the store and you saw Mr. Garton come out of the store with Uncle Jim! Mr. Garton said to get the school kids lookin' for Bill, because the cage was stuck and the men couldn't find him." Sally was evading the teacher's question. She leaned forward now, twisting her hands. "Miss Trenchard, I had to tell 'em. My Dad was in the cage, and if it dropped somebody could of got hurt bad. Don't you see, Miss Trenchard? I *had* to tell."

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"Yes, Sally; of course you had to tell them." The teacher felt pity for this strange, thin little girl with the big green eyes.

Sally sighed deeply. "So I tole 'em," she finished.

The teacher's mind raced over the events of the night before. The coal camp here had a shaft mine, with miners carried down into the mine and out again in crude elevators called cages. Something had gone wrong with the wiring, and the cage had hung suspended half way up the shaft. A drop to the bottom, out of control, could have killed or badly injured every man in the cage. Bill, the mine electrician, couldn't be found until Sally had told Garton and Uncle Jim that he was at Minnie Kennedy's.

Minnie Kennedy was, in camp parlance "No better than she should be". Pert, pretty, excelsior blonde Minnie lived on the outskirts of camp, with no visible means of support. Bill had been located at Minnie's.

TODAY THE camp was seething. Bill's wife, Dorothy, had left him and gone home to her mother, fifteen miles away at County Seat. Dorothy had wailed that she was going to divorce Bill. Bill had mended the wiring, and the cage surfaced safely.

The camp was split, and Sally was being blamed for blurting out where Bill was, instead of quietly telling a key person. But how was the child to know about such things as Minnie? Had this been the only case, the camp would not have paid much attention; but Sally had the knack of saying the most disconcerting things in the place that was most embarrassing.

"Please, Miss Trenchard!" The teacher had been so busy with her thoughts she had almost forgotten the child standing there. "Miss Trenchard, are they going to put me in—in the asylum?" Sally was crying now, sobs shaking her thin body. "Mama thinks maybe they will. She thinks maybe it would be the best thing for me to have good doctors who know how to take care of—people like me." Shudderingly the child gulped it out.

"Sally! What in the world do you mean? Asylums are for people who have lost their minds; you aren't crazy!"

"I'm not?" Sally's eyes widened, then filled again. "I guess I just fooled you Miss Trenchard. I tried to fool everybody here, but I forget sometimes and say things." The teacher looked her astonishment.

"I don't mean to, Miss Trenchard," Sally hastily explained. "Why do folks say I'm crazy because sometimes I answer questions like last night? Other kids

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answer questions, and no one thinks nothing about it. It's only when I do that everybody gets mad. They get mad if I don't say nothing when they ask me questions, too—and it's a sin to tell lies. How can I say I don't know when I do?"

"Sally, there's nothing crazy about you answering questions, even Uncle Jim's question last night. Bill was needed badly, and he was found because you told them where to find him. But Sally, how *did* you know where he was? You couldn't have seen him, I know that. How?"

The teacher's arm went around Sally, drew her close. Sally twisted her head and struggled feebly. "Please, Sally," Miss Trenchard tried to lift the child's pointed chin.

"I ain't got a hankie," Sally wailed, "and my nose is runnin'."

Miss Trenchard laughed softly. "Of course," she said, and reached in her desk drawer for a box of tissues. "Here, blow!"

Sally blew and managed a shaky smile, then stiffened a second before the teacher spoke again. "How did you know, Sally?"

Sally's head dropped, her foot kicked aimlessly at a chair leg. "I don't know," she said.

"But Sally—you must know! I won't be angry, whatever it is. Just tell me."

"Miss Trenchard, I don't never know how I know. People are always asking me 'How do you know Sally?'. How does anybody know what they know Miss Trenchard? They ain't always saying to everybody else 'How do you know'. Why does everybody pick on me? I try to be good Miss Trenchard; honest I do. I bet I try harder than any kid in camp."

Sally twisted away now, weeping and defiant. "I wisht I was dead," she said slowly. Horror-stricken the teacher saw that Sally meant it; her green eyes were hurt and incomprehending, tragic.

"Oh, Sally! My dear, my dear!" The teacher forgot her questions in pity for this unhappy pupil. She had to do something to help Sally. Whatever it took, she had to do it. It was monstrous that a child this young should be so desperately unhappy.

Defiance went out of Sally's stance. "Mama said mostly I was doing real well here until last night," Sally whimpered. "Now she thinks maybe we all better move again. That or let 'em take me to—to the asylum. I don't want to go to no asylum!"

The school bell rang as Miss Trenchard opened her mouth. Her question was never voiced. Instead she said, "Take your seat now Sally. Don't worry, child; we'll have another talk later."

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Miss Trenchard was principal of this two-room school, and as she walked to the door to supervise the lines forming to march in, she wished there were someone that she could go to for advice and help.

Perhaps Kenneth would have a suggestion. She fingered the solitare on her fourth finger gently. She would talk to him about Sally tonight. Certainly the camp was becoming explosive about Sally, and something needed to be done. But what?

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THE AFTERNOON raced. There was so little time, with four grades to handle and classes for subjects in each grade to be heard. The children had been dismissed when the teacher remembered she hadn't spoken to Sally. She would walk down to the Banim home anyway, she thought, remembering Sally's big eyes and the desperation in them. She was such a sensitive, unhappy child.

Sally was waiting outside the schoolroom door. "Oh, hello Sally. I'm so glad you're here; I meant to tell you I wanted to walk home with you."

"Yes, ma'am. I waited." Sally spoke apathetically. Miss Trenchard looked at her sharply. She had only meant to speak to Sally, but she hadn't done it. It was uncanny the way the child seemed to know so many things. No wonder camp people were uncomfortable around her. Few people do not have something they would just as soon that others did not know.

Sally's shoulders drooped more than usual as she trailed along at the teacher's side, kicking rocks. The teacher shook mental shoulders; she mustn't allow camp gossip to influence her. When they stepped on the porch of the Banim home, Sally called, "Mama! Teacher's here with me."

Mrs. Banim, a nervous, middle-aged woman, hurried to the door to greet them.

"Come in, Miss Trenchard. Come in. Sally hasn't—Sally isn't in trouble at school is she?" The woman peered into the teacher's face with a worried little frown.

"Oh, no. I never have any trouble with her Mrs. Banim," the teacher answered. "But I did want to talk to you. Sally, do you want to go out and—" Miss Trenchard glanced down to where Sally had stood; she was gone. There it was again! It made Miss Trenchard a little nervous herself. It was spooky!

Mrs. Banim was dusting a chair with the corner of her apron. "Sit down, Miss Trenchard," she invited with words and erratic little gestures.

"I don't quite understand Sally," Miss Trenchard said as she sat.

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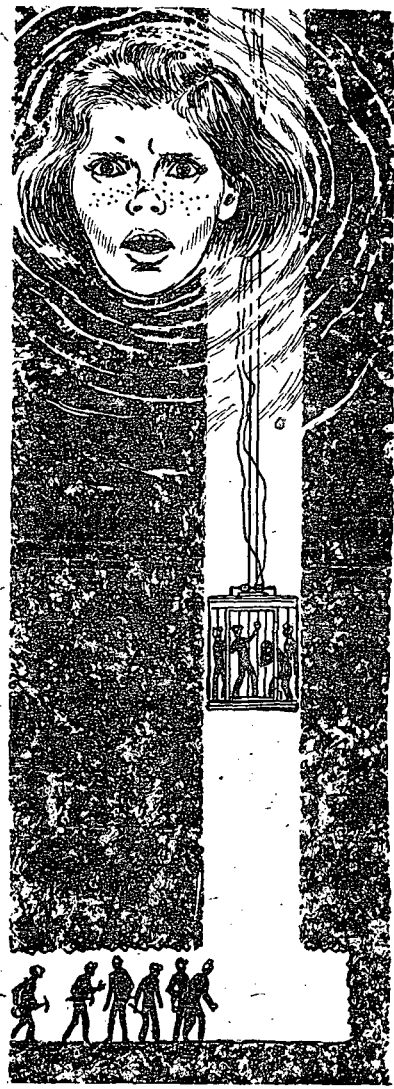
"I thought perhaps you might be able to help me."

"I can't." There was hopelessness in Mrs. Banim's voice. "I wish I could, but I don't understand her myself. None of the other children are—they're all healthy, normal children. A body knows what to do with them. But Sally! I'm scared to death what she's going to say next when anyone is around. She's continually getting not only herself but the whole family in trouble."

Mrs. Banim was peering closely at the teacher's face, her eyes the color of faded blue denim. The cheek-muscles on her right cheek quivered slightly and repeatedly in a nervous tic. Perhaps this mother was the root of Sally's trouble the teacher thought momentarily.

Mrs. Banim went on. "Some folks are saying Sally shouldn't have spoken out last night," she said. "I suppose you've come about that, since it ain't something at school. Well, I don't blame Sally this time. Her father *was* in that cage, and goodness only knows what would have happened if Bill hadn't been found quick. I tell you, I don't blame Sally. I'd a-told myself if I had a-known."



MISS TRENCHARD leaned forward. "That's just it, Mrs. Banim. How did Sally know? I'm not blaming her for telling where

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Bill was, even if Dorothy does get a divorce. It's not Sally's fault that he was—where he shouldn't have been. But how did she know where he was, and that her father was in that one cage? He might have been on any trip coming out, but you tell me he was on that one. Sally said he was on that trip last night; I heard her. How could she know?"

Mrs. Banim's hands spread in a helpless gesture. "Nobody has ever figgered out how Sally knows things, Miss Trenchard. We've tried and tried to get her to tell us, and all she does is cry and say she don't know.

"It's always been that-a-way, and she's right when she says people are a-scared of her and blame her with all kinds of things she ain't done. Like they did in Brownsville. We ain't told why we left there and come here. Well, the reason is the same as what is a-building up here. And two other places a-fore that."

"What do you mean Mrs. Banim? Sally's a good, obedient child; she never does anything vicious or mean!"

"No, she don't. Some people get mad at her, and some get afraid. Either one is as bad as t'other. Her father says—" Mrs. Banim's chin sought to hide on her scanty fleshed breast, "that if things—go wrong—here we'll just have to send Sally to an asylum."

Walking to her boarding house in the gathering dusk, the troubled teacher paused to speak to Mrs. Schnitzler, perched on a ladder, hammering at the top door facing of her front door.

"What in the world are you doing Mrs. Schnitzler?" she inquired conversationally.

Mrs. Schnitzler half turned on the ladder. "I put cross on door for witch," she said. "I think no witch in this country. Now I see was wrong. Is one here."

"Oh, no!" Miss Trenchard said gently. "We don't have witches in America Mrs. Schnitzler."

"Is so," the woman answered. "That Sally Banim is witch. Me, I know! I haf seen witch in Vienna. Just lak her, but more older."

In spite of herself, Miss Trenchard found her eyes searching other door-facings as she slowly walked away. This coal camp population was in main immigrants from Europe. It would indeed go hard with Sally if some way were not found to stop the hysteria immediately.

Unable to stop thinking of Sally, Miss Trenchard picked up a magazine to read until Kenneth Burk called for her that evening. She didn't have to force attention long. Thumbing through the pages of a sensational Sunday news-magazine supplement she saw an article that

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stopped her. "What is *ESP?*" the title demanded. *"Noted doctor discusses Extra-Sensory Perception"* read the sub-head.

THE TEACHER'S eyes were racing when Burk appeared. Miss Trenchard dropped the magazine, stood and smiled. Kenneth was so handsome he was almost pretty. Miss Trenchard was glad her fiancee's ears were a little too large; she didn't want to marry a pretty man. A man as handsome as Kenneth was bound to have a few people make jealous, nasty remarks about him. Then, too, his father being wealthy didn't help matters as far as gossip was concerned.

"Come on, woman," he said softly after he had kissed her. "I have tickets to the Little Theater at Carson. We're already late."

Miss Trenchard forgot Sally, crosses over doors, ESP, and camp in general as she pulled a sequined stole over her shoulders and left with Kenneth.

The next morning on the way to school she was reminded by seeing another house with a cross over the door, and a third with a little bulb of garlic swaying in the early breeze. Apprehensively she knew afresh that old-world superstition was as close to these people as it had been in medieval Europe.

Sally was on the school ground as Miss Trenchard climbed the hill. Her smile was pathetically grateful when Miss Trenchard spoke. "What were you playing Sally?" the teacher asked.

"Counting," Sally answered promptly.

"Counting what?"

"Hops and steps," Sally said, a bit uneasily now.

"Why?"

"If you're busy counting, your head can't—" the child paused in confusion. "I don't know the word for what it is Miss Trenchard," she confessed.

"Think?" the teacher smiled sympathetically. "Is that the word you want?"

"I guess so," Sally aimlessly kicked a small stone. She wore a curiously listening, unhappy expression. Characteristic, the teacher thought concernedly. With a gentle pat and a smile of farewell the teacher walked away. Back of her she could hear the plop-plop of Sally's worn little shoe hitting the dust of the schoolyard.

Late in the afternoon, a note was delivered to the teacher. She read it, drawing in her breath sharply. Little Teddy Van Houten had been missing since around noon. Would she dismiss the upper grades to help search the camp, while adults spread afield?

Reflexively, Miss Trenchard looked at Sally. Again that curious

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listening look. Would Sally know where Teddy was? Could she find him?

Quickly she explained to the children, directing them to report to Mr. Corbett at the company store. "Wait for me Sally," she commanded as she supervised the other children marching out. "We'll go down after I tell Miss Eckert." Miss Eckert was the second teacher in this little school.

Sally nodded and sat down, her head held slightly to one side, a small pucker between her eyes. When Miss Trenchard returned, Sally didn't seem to hear her. She was sitting quietly with an air of intense concentration.

"Do you know where Teddy is, Sally?" Miss Trenchard asked. If Sally knew, she was going to go herself and get Teddy, and not let Sally be exposed to the venom of camp incomprehension and fear.

Slowly Sally shook her head, green eyes wide. "I can't find him Miss Trenchard. He ain't—isn't—talking."

"You can't hear people all over can you Sally?"

"Sort of," Sally wriggled uncomfortably. "Sometimes," she amended.

MISS TRENCHARD felt a sense of relief. Sally was observant, and unusually logical for a child, that was all. Then she recalled she was supposed to meet Kenneth after school to go to County Seat for dinner. He would not have left his boarding house yet. Swiftly she wrote a few words of explanation, inclosing the note that had been sent her about Teddy.

She didn't want to stop at his boarding house. Mrs. Garton was his landlady, and she didn't want to give her fuel for her tongue. She would have Sally deliver the note.

"Sally dear, will you take this note to Mr. Burk please? Run—and wait for me at the store."

Sally's green eyes were wide. "He's already gone, Miss Trenchard," the child said.

"Gone? How do—" she had started to ask the question that inevitably started Sally's tears. "You mean he's searching for Teddy! Naturally, he would be. I suppose everyone is, or they wouldn't have asked help from school children."

"No, ma'am; he's gone to Carson."

"Carson? What for?" Miss Trenchard voiced her question. She was disturbed. He wouldn't have gone without telling her, when they had a date after school.

"He didn't want to go," Sally explained. "Vera said he had to, or she'd tell his paw about the baby."

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Anger flared in the teacher's breast, blotting out the missing child, everything. Vera! A waitress in Carson. Her name had been linked with Kenneth's, and Kenneth had told her there was nothing to it. Now here was this child calmly repeating gossip, telling her that Kenneth was seeing Vera!

"Sally," her voice was stern. "Never repeat that to anyone. It isn't so, do you hear me? It just isn't so!"

Sally's eyes were swimming in tears. "Yes, ma'am. I'm sorry Miss Trenchard. You didn't ast me where Mr. Burk went; I shouldn't have said nothing. I always go and forget."

Miss Trenchard was too angry to soothe Sally now; she didn't even want her around. "Go straight home Sally," she ordered. "It will be better for you to stay with your mother."

Sally nodded and quietly walked away, closing the door softly behind her. Miss Trenchard could hear her sobs, even with the door closed. She was sorry—but no wonder people were irritated! That thought predominated as she made her way to the company store to aid in the search for the missing Teddy.

THE NIGHT that followed was a nightmare of voices clanging like gongs in the wind, flashlights and lanterns weaving in ever widening circles. No Teddy. Old mine shafts and caves dotted the area. It was dangerous for a child—or a man—lost at night.

The sky at dawn was slate gray, the taste of dull winter and snow in its mouth. No Teddy. Groups drifted in, drank coffee, and went out again. Miss Trenchard, making sandwiches, washing cups and spoons in search headquarters, had little time to think of Kenneth. By midnight she had quit scanning faces of incoming groups with eager eyes searching for his handsome face; he wasn't out with the search parties.

State Police were on the scene by seven in the morning. The tired teacher was just turning her duties to a woman who had had some rest, if not sleep, when a green-eyed hurricane burst through the door.

"Miss Trenchard! Miss Trenchard! I know where Teddy is now," she cried. "You wanted to go. He's in a hole in back of the mule barn; he's hurt, and awful scared. Hurry, Miss Trenchard! You gotta hurry," the child insisted.

A State Policeman took Sally by the arm. "Show me," he said.

Sally wrenched her arm free. "Miss Trenchard wanted to find him," she cried. "Come on quick, please Miss Trenchard."

"Yes, Sally. Come on dear; show us."

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Teddy's weak voice cried from the bottom of a long-forgotten dry well mouth, boarded over and dirt-piled over the boards. A gaping hole told of breakage. He was quickly brought to the surface and a doctor knelt over him.

"Hospital," he ordered. "Concussion. He's probably been unconscious most of the time. No—don't touch him, Mrs. Van Houten. There may be other injuries. Let's get him to the hospital at once."

The man who had gone down in the well for Teddy now sent up his dog, a terrier pup. The boy put his hand out, patted the dog. "My puppy falled in hole, and I couldn't get him," he said, closing his eyes.

"Teddy's been found," the word spread like a broadcast through the camp. "Teddy's found!"

"Who?" came like and echo of "Where?"

"Sally Banim told 'em where he was, and sure enough, he was where she said."

"How'd she know?"

"She wasn't searching. I ask *you* how did she know if she didn't have something to do with him being there?" Mrs. Garton asked.

The question was picked up, tossed, repeated, distorted. "Sally Banim pushed Teddy in an old well and kept quiet about it all night." Ominously it gathered, festering in the breasts of tired men; shooting fear for their own children into breasts of women. Mrs. Garton picked up the end of the tale she had tossed out, and failed to recognize her own invention. "I, for one, don't put it a bit past her," she chattered viciously. "I wondered about it myself. I allus said that snoopy kid would cause trouble." There was sadistic pleasure in her voice. "Now she has done it. We gotta get her outta camp."

A POLICE officer, standing uneasily by his car, lifted his head. Trained to know the temper of crowds, he opened the door of his car and commanded, "Get in, Sally. You, too—stay with her Miss. Quick."

Miss Trenchard got in with Sally, too tired to feel the surge that meant danger swelling in the crowd. Sally cowered against her side, hiding her face. She was trembling violently. Siren screaming the car pulled out and headed toward County Seat.

"Where are we going?" Miss Trenchard asked.

"That crowd wants to know how Sally knew where the kid was if she didn't have a hand in him being there," the officer grunted.

"Oh—no!" Miss Trenchard be-

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gan to cry. Sally was not crying, but her body shook like an unbolted dynamo. The officer reached over and snapped on the car radio. "Let's see what the newscast has to say," he mumbled.

"—doctor says he has been unconscious most of the time during the long hours in the well," the newscaster was saying. The radio announcer's voice changed in timbre, and he went on. "The surprise marriage of Kenneth Burk and Vera Cather at County Seat last night has been announced by the bride's parents, Mr. and Mrs. Don Cather, of Carson. Burk is the son of J. R. Burk, president and general manager of Burk Consolidated Mines, and is—"

Miss Trenchard's hand reached out and snapped the radio off. Her face was drawn, her eyes filled with fear. For one intense moment she hated Sally, sitting there next to her. As though it were Sally's doings that Kenneth—her Kenneth—was married to *that woman*. Her face crumpled like tissue paper and she sobbed aloud, then lifted her face as Sally spoke.

Sally's voice was a sad, old one. "How far is it to the asylum?" she asked quietly.

"We're not going to an asylum, Sally," the bewildered officer said. "Just to County Seat."

"Yes. You don't have to go on, but I do," Sally said slowly. "Miss Trenchard's afraid of me now; there's no one left."

Her thin hands clenched and opened. The nails had cut little half moons in her palms, and from each a thin circle of blood welled up, rolled slowly down toward her fingers.

★

Inside Science Fiction

[*Continued From Page* 107]

ing Conrad H. Ruppert) was slanted for the s-f adherent.

The June and July issues of FM printed news-columns by Julius Schwartz, Mort Weisinger, and Ray Palmer. Ackerman appeared every issue with a scientifilm department, and there were interviews with Seabury Quinn and Laurence Manning. Donald A. Wollheim wrote about "Scientificartoons," Schwartz and Milton Kaletsky continued their popular survey, "Scientific Hoaxes," and Thomas S. Gardner discussed "Fallacies of Science Fiction." Chapter 13 of "Cosmos" entitled "What A Course!" by E. E. Smith, was published in the July issue. This chapter was later reprinted in *Thrilling Wonder Stories*, June, 1939, under the title, "Robot Nemesis."

Further discussion of the 1934 science fiction field will be published next issue.

★

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down to earth

Where The Readers Talk Back

Dear RWL:

It seems like just a few months since I typed up my first "twelve issue report" to you, although it's been two years. In a way, I'm just as glad that you don't appear every month; this is fun when I only have to do it two years apart.

For my money, the best three covers for volumes three and four were Ross' for July 1952; Luros' for July 1953; and Luros again for March 1953. The least attractive to me were those by Schomberg for January 1954; Ross for May 1953; and Luros for May 1952. Since your art director seems to go to the well most frequently, it's not surprising that he drops the pitcher now and then; what is surprising is that his average is such a good one.

Well, since this is going to be l-o-n-g, I'd better get down to business. The way I've worked it out, since the first time, is to give myself a two-months' waiting period before rating the stories in each issue. This gives me a little chance to forget them; and since I do a lot of reading, the stories I remember best and with the most pleasure—some hundreds of thousands of words later—are the ones that go into the "1" or "2" spots. I've tried to make my listing on a more or less "absolute" basis—I mean, the best story in a given issue doesn't necessarily get a "1"; the issue might have been under par, and the best not better than just good.

The "1"s then are stories I'd put into anthologies if I had the

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chance; the "2"s are stories I thought very good, but not tops; the "3"s are stories that I definitely enjoyed but probably would not read again; the "4"s are stories that went down all right, but which I don't particularly remember without looking them up (I had to look them up in order to make a comment); and the "5"s are stories I remember because I thought you shouldn't have taken them under any circumstances—well, almost any!

As we did last time, I'm setting up three sets of parenthesis for the rating figures. The first is Mr. Freeman's rating; the second is my own—without looking any story up; and the third is blank for you to fill in if you like. *RWL*

(1) (1) ( ) Doomsday's Color Press—Jones: one of the most powerful stories I've seen anywhere.

(1) (1) ( ) We Are Alone—Sheckley: a new idea, and a fascinating one.

(1) (1) ( ) Time Stops Today—Wyndham: refreshingly believable treatment of an old theme.

(1) (1) ( ) Testament of Andros—Blish: my nomination for the story of its year; this author's masterpiece to date.

(1) (1) ( ) ...And The Truth Shall Make You Free—Simak: while I couldn't accept the philosophy, it was an excellent story.

(1) (1) ( ) Liberation of Earth—Tenn: whoever said that this was reminiscent of Voltaire hit the nail on the head. I think it's Tenn's finest.

(1) (1) ( ) Ecological Onslaught—Vance: well nigh ideal blend of adventure-action with absorbing science-fiction background.

(1) (1) ( ) Graveyard—Dickson: fine characterization and motivation.

(1) (1) ( ) Dust Thou Art—Neville: perhaps Neville has done better, but I haven't read any better by him; for once an author knows his highgrade stuff.

(1) (1) ( ) To Save A World—Cox, Jr.: unpleasant but convincing.

(1) (2) ( ) Double-Talk—Dye: I've read this one half a dozen times!

(1) (1) ( ) Ultimatum—Sheckley: ditto.

(1) (1) ( ) To Civilize—Budrys: this author is splendid when he doesn't try to be a literate Mickey Spillane.

(1 (1) ( ) Wampum — Merwin, Jr.: the first story I've read by Merwin that was moving as well as amusing; surprising depth for this author.

(2 (2) ( ) Equations For Destiny—Berryman: a trifle dated, and I was aware of this while I read it.

(2) (2) ( ) Because of the Stars—Dye: excellent adventure, but not sufficient depth in characters.

(2) (2) ( ) Courier of Chaos—Jones: the idea saves a rather tired plot.

(2) (2) ( ) Cold War—Warner, Jr.: very fine for a "first", but I was aware of a certain lack of writing "touch".

(2) (2) ( ) Judas of the Spaceways—Kubilius: space-opera, but with this author's characteristic warmth that ennobles even mediocre material.

(2) (2) ( ) Four Hundred

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Blackbirds—Vance: perhaps a story with this type of plot could get a "1" from me, but not when I noticed the plot while I read.

(2) (2) ( ) The Aeropause—Dye: too many fantastic elements in a short length to make this one of the best, but wonderful in its own flawed way.

(2) (2) ( ) Stand Watch in the Sky—Budrys: a bit short on coherence.

(2) (2) ( ) RX Jupiter Save Us—Moore: I enjoyed it, but couldn't help thinking how much more sharply William Tenn could have drawn it.

(2) (2) ( ) The Wayward Course—Garrett: just very very good, but not outstanding.

(2) (2) ( ) The Oldfashioned Spaceman—Dryfoos: lots of fun, but not entirely convincing.

(3 (2) ( ) The Twice-Told Man—Raboid: I wouldn't rate a fable any higher—not even Aesop.

(3) (2) ( ) The Rememberers—Blair: well, I remembered it.

(3) (2) ( ) Unreasonable Facsimile—del Rey: a suggestion, but just a suggestion, of the oldtime master.

(3) (2) ( ) The Gods Fear Love—Hunter: a good try.

(3) (3) ( ) Confidence—Fyfe: enjoyable, as usual for this author.

(3) (3) ( ) Facts of Life—Dryfoos: cute.

(3) (3) ( ) The Winning of Wooha—Winterbotham: I remember this author as the H. B. Fyfe of his time, back in the '30s.

(3) (3) ( ) The Compleat of Collector—Fyfe: more of same, and it doesn't pall at all.

(3) (3) ( ) Minority Decision—Walton: the author tried, and did pretty well, but his stories seem to be pretty much of a piece.

(3) (2) ( ) In The Beginning—Knight: good minor work for Damon.

(3) (3) ( ) The Moon is Death—Jones: competent, interesting, but not very believable.

(3) (2) ( ) Romance — Fyfe: this would rate higher if I'd never read "Venus and the Seven Sexes".

(3) (3) ( ) The World is Yours—Warner, Jr.: smoother than "Cold War", but there's less to it.

(3) (3) ( ) Tenth-Level Enigma—Machado, Jr.: a bit of a strain on my credulity, though enjoyable.

(3) (2) ( ) Martian Ritual—Latham: overlong for its point.

(3) (3) ( ) Please to Remember—Reynolds: amusing.

(3) (3) ( ) Counter-check—De Vet: good space-opera; enough said.

(3) (3) ( ) Counter - Irritant—Dickson: interesting enough, but slight.

(3) (3) ( ) High Sign—Dryfoos: in the Fyfe-Winterbotham orbit.

(3) (3) ( ) The Square Peg—Arr: the end was predictable.

(4) (3) ( ) Thy Days Are Numbered—West: not bad, but hardly memorable.

(4) (3) ( ) Forgive us Our Debts—del Rey: nothing in the way of fiction you've run by this author, since "Mind of Tomorrow", has substantiated his reputation—with the possible exception of his article, "Get Thee Behind Me, Clio".

(4) (3) ( ) They Shall Rise—West: see "Thy Days Are Numbered".

(4) (3) ( ) The Second Ship—Bixby: can't say I really cared.

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(4) (3) ( ) We Will Inherit—West: see "Thy Days are Numbered".

(4) (3) ( ) Final Barrier—Nourse: this could have taken place on Earth.

(4) (3) ( ) Small Fry—Collins: well, you had to have a cover story, I suppose.

(4) (3) ( ) ...And Found Wanting—West: see "Thy Days Are Numbered".

(5) (3) ( ) Incident in Iopa—Wilson: hardly *Future's* type of story.

(4) (3) ( ) Road to Rome—Grinnell: fluff.

(4) (3) ( ) Freedom of the Press—Warner, Jr.: likewise.

(4) (3) ( ) Anyone Here Seen Herbie Green?—Ottum: didn't make it.

(4) (3) ( ) Ixtl Igo, Son—Banks: more fluff.

(4) (3) ( ) Ten Minutes to Daylight—Winterbotham: trite.

(4) (3) ( ) The Penultimate Weapon—Thomas: old hat.

(5) (4) ( ) Realization—Singer: done to death.

(5) (4) ( ) Legion of the Lost—Coppel: the theme creaks.

(5) (2) ( ) A Big Man With the Girls—MacCreigh-Merril: at least one of the authors should forget science fiction and shift to the *Ladies Home Journal.*

(5) (3) ( ) Strike — Wilson: not up to *Future's* level.

(5) (1) ( ) Where Or When—MacLean: this author belongs in *Theosophical Notes*, or the like.

(5) (3) ( ) New Weapon—Wilson: see "Strike".

(5) (4) ( ) The Payoff—Binder: belongs in the comic books.

I make it a total of 67 stories, as against 73 in the first two volumes. This time, 14 were outstanding, while there were 12 in my last rating. 11 were very good, while you had 19 in that category last time. 20 were decidedly enjoyable, the same figure as for 1950/52. 14 were no more than readable; I put 13 down in that position last time. And 8 I thought were pretty bad to awful; last rating showed 9. Right now I'm too weary to harass my feeble mathematics with trying to work out percentages, but I'll close with the thought that, on retrospection, your "best" for volumes 3 and 4 was better than for volumes 1 and 2—and the lemons were no sourer than before.

—Willis Freeman,
Skowhegan, Maine.

Hmm, I wonder if you'd agree with your ratings, as we ran them in the May 1952 issue, were you to go over the first two volumes. Sometimes it's a good idea to let first impressions alone.

Dear Bob:

Possibly many readers may not have appreciated and enjoyed your editorial in the January issue as much as I, although I'm sure that few, if any, bitter complaints were addressed your way. To me, however, it was most fascinating, since it inadvertently answered the question contained in my last letter. I'm not adolescent or self-centered enough to think that you decided to reminisce purely for my benefit—but thanks, anyway; it pleases me to believe that we are capable of some sort of communication via **mental** atunement.

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Must confess that I'm rather dubious about the possible worth of Moore's Novella. Afraid I've been prejudiced against Moore to some degree, ever since a certain Kendall Foster Crossen described him as being "one of the two greatest writers in the field". I rather distrust, and am inclined to view with a wary eye, any postulations, theories, or convictions put for by Monsieur Crossen (He's the boy that wants to throw the science out of science-fiction you know); thus I have put off reading "Rx Jupiter Save Us" to a later date.

Which by process of elimentation brings us to the shorts, and poses a problem. I don't know if you're aware of it or not, but it seems 'tis no longer cricket to merely discuss the fictional contents of a particular issue of a particular magazine. Nay'...one must expound for the public's enlightening his/her theories on one or more of the following subjects: (1) Sex, (2) Religion, (3) The quality, or lack thereof, of letters appearing in previous issues. These aforementioned-objects of controversy have been d r à g g e d through the mire so often that it's beginning to be a bit tiresome; as a random-selection let's take religion. Individuals of vast, extensive theological backgrounds have apparently striven for lifetimes attempting to form an all-inclusive theory, which would once and for all settle the old arguments, and prove *something* beyond a shadow of a doubt. However, as yet, nothing of staggering merit has been conceived. I, personally, don't feel up to leading anyone (or any group) out of the wilderness of their present beliefs; neither have I conceived of any great "cosmic truth" to disperse the fog of confusion. Unless someone h a s a serious objection couldn't I just discuss the stories. ...Please? It's getting so bad, I'm considering reviving the old staple controversy (A la Tucker); wonder if that would go over.

Algis Budrys', "To Civilize" was quite possibly the best of the shorts. Dryfoos' had a very similar plot in his *Thrilling Wonder Stories* yarn titled, "The Sign of Homo Sap". It had for a working-point the fact (?) that the human, of all types of thinking organisms, is the only one which smiles. I didn't care for "High Sign", and doubt that I would of accepted it (My standards for the more "mature" types of SF, as opposed to fantasy, are remarkably high...often I fling a copy of *Galaxy* aside with the mental conviction that I, if editor, would have used not a one of the yarns). Russ Winterbotham's little epic was rather muddled; just *why* the BEM was fooled into thinking that Spane was "eating" his partner wasn't clear...or did I miss something? Won't bother to comment on the Thomas tale. As if you needed any assurance of it I shall now state that Madle's column is magnificent; anyone making unkind remarks anent it will be bannished to the Western magazines.

In closing may I say that the Schomburg cover was excellent? Let us hope you can secure more of his superior work.

—*Paul Mittelbuscher,*
Sweet Springs, Mo.

Sometimes it does seem as if many fans consider it beneath them to discuss science fiction, or

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the contents of a particular issue itself, in letters to the editor. On the other hand, most science-fictionists are probably interested in another fan's viewpoints on a much wider range of material. I try to hold discussion to reasonably-allied subjects when selecting letters.

●

Dear Bob,

At times like this I'm glad I'm not a lady. Reference is to the March cover. I have nothing against the female form, possessing one myself, but aren't you being rather obvious? One thing bothers me. Are they making a giant statue, or are they a group of the Little Men? Darn! I had some very nasty things to say about the cover, but now that I've looked closer, I like it. Judging by the eyeballs, the artist must read "Pogo".

Hey lad, your ink is slipping. No doubt you are sick of hearing me talk about it, but I'm going to keep right on until you do something. And don't tell me I have hot little hands; Brother John read this issue first, and the ink smeared all over his hands. And his hands only get hot when he eats ice cream. (You should see the way he eats ice cream!) Come to think of it, he doesn't eat ice cream. Oh well.

The stories are up to your usual level, a notch below mediocrity. When are you going to get some *good* stories? The last one was "Testament of Andros", over a year ago. And thanks for the index; it beats plowing through the pile when I want to look something up. The "Almanac" is nice, too; and Madle is superb. Why don't you put out a mag with nothing but special features. It should sell; all the features are better than the fiction.

All, that is, but the book reviews. To say it nicely, they are not quite what they should be. To put it bluntly: they stink! Every thing the vitriolic Megahan says about Crossen goes triple for Knight. Knight can write excellent reviews; his reviews in SFA are neat, concise and live up to the title "The Dissecting Table". Far cry from the long, pointless ramblings in *Future*. A review (?) like the one for "Tomorrow the Stars" is wonderful. Us fen (a snobbish title meaning "this reader") like reading about Our Boys as much as the Normals enjoy gossip about movie stars. So, if all you Inner Circleers want to reminisce, go right ahead. Fine, dandy, wonderful, etc. But when he goes on, and on, and on, and on, and on, and on, and on—it is time he joins the Smiling People. What he said could have gone into one paragraph. The rest of the space could be used for three or four more reviews. You should either improve your book-reviews, making them interesting (they seldom are) and up to date (The reprints of the books Knight gives the hard-cover prices for have long since been sold out.), or drop them entirely. Give Madle more space, or print more letters.

Speaking of letters (ahem)... Crossen has a point, but he carries it too far. Mr. Crossen, there are five stories in the March *Future*. Come, tell us what the writers are telling about themselves; that is a challenge, by the way.

Dan Butler is *so* right about most letters in the mags (especial-

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ly those dribbling things in *Madge*). But why won't he give his address? Correct me if I'm wrong, but I say he is a coward. "Address withheld by request" huh! If we have to read his letter, we are entitled to know *why* he won't give an address. So tell us, Bob. Why?

Nothing annoys me more than these fen who write letters to you, telling you that you are one of the top pulp editors. They also say the same thing to Mines and O'Sullivan. If you three are leading, who is left to follow? Hmmmm?

—*Jean Courtois, 318 East Commercial Street, Appleton, Wisconsin.*

Any letter sent to Mr. Butler, in care of this address, will reach him; he's in a position where he can't let his address be published. There's always a good reason when I run a letter with an address withheld.

●

Who Is The Fan? [*Continued From Page 5*]

well-integrated person—might well behave, given extreme circumstances, cannot possibly be a "science fiction fan".

The writer also states, "If a young fan really did believe that aliens were trying to recruit suicide-pilots via television programs, he would be more likely to try to expose and fight them than cower down to them, and be judas goats for other fans. The few fans who did believe that Shaver was telling the truth didn't try to appease the Deroes; they tried to start expeditions to locate the caves, and wipe the Little Men out. Dupes, yes, but not cowards or traitors."

Now from what we have observed of human behaviour we know that some persons give way under what others might consider rather mild stress and anxiety; some fight back under what others would consider overwhelming stress. Some vacilliate between the two poles of reaction.

I should like to see facts and figures on our reader's above contention that *all* those fans who believed wholeheartedly in the existence and menace of Shaver's mythical "deroes" were of such makeup that the pressure of this situation—real to them, however imaginary in actual fact—invariably brought forth a response of determined opposition.

Our critic's theory is that *all* "true fans", would have such reactions to any kind of extreme situation; the proposition is that this fascinating being, the "true fan", is of such a physical constitution that he could not react to extreme situations in a way which anyone else might conceivably consider "cowardly", "traitorous", or "un-

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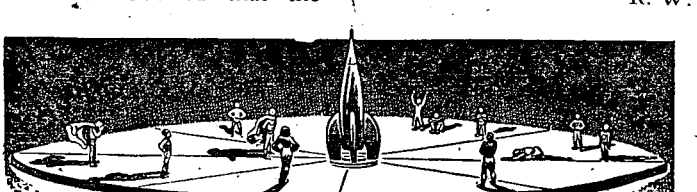
manly". An unproved assertion, at best. (I'm not sure how the female of the species is supposed to enter in to this; but perhaps we can assume that here, as elsewhere, the female is still deadlier than the male.) And, of course, we have the perfect answer to any statistics anyone wants to offer in opposition: if this one acted in a way you'd call "cowardly", "traitorous", or "unmanly", then he wasn't really a "fan".

If such beings as the "true fan" exist, then we must give them credit for a really superior job of self-camouflage, for—despite the numerous assertions of their existence in the writings of some science-fiction hobbyists—I have yet to see any evidence such a being can be found anywhere. Nor do I recall seeing any contentions from the proponents of the "true fan" theory that they themselves would assuredly do so-and-so under such-and-such extreme circumstances; it has always been this mysterious, abstract "true fan" who is held up for admiration and emulation.

It has been claimed that the secret behind this difference between "true fan" and ordinary human is simply one of intelligence. Unfortunately, this doesn't clarify anything; cases abound where persons of a very low level of intelligence have been "heroes" while persons of high intelligence, etc., were "cowards" and "traitors". (And, of course, it often depends upon which side you favor as to whether a given person is a "traitor"; to the English in the 18th Century, George Washington was a traitor, while Benedict Arnold was a man, once involved in treason, who finally saw the light and returned to the course of honor.)

As nearly as I can make out, this theory of the "true fan" is held and promulgated only by a minority within the science fiction orbit. While the number of persons who believe in a theory has little to do with its soundness, I must confess that the situation in this case makes life a little easier for your editor. The sad fact is that I'm not a "true fan".

—R. W. L.



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Sam Baracol was fond of his niece, Mara, but women had to stay in their place in this world — and their place most certainly was not in a chemical laboratory, helping a man discover the formula for an elixir of sheer delight!

Here's A Fascinating Novelet

POLAR PUNCH

by Boyd Ellanby

You'll find it leading off the August issue of

SCIENCE FICTION QUARTERLY

Which authors would you like to see in forthcoming issues?

.....

.....

.....

Are there any type of stories which you would like to see?

.....

.....

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Which artists would you like us to use?

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The Reckoning

My apologies for the mixup, wherein we gave you the breakdown on the March issue, rather than the January issue. Only one story in the issue failed to receive any first-place votes, while the winner received a few poisoned barbs, too. The cover wasn't liked, on the whole — it won't be repeated. Here's the score:

1. Rx Jupiter Save Us (*Moore*)	2.30
2. To Civilize (*Budrys*)	2.40
3. High Sign (*Dryfoos*) *tied with* The Penultimate Weapon (*Thomas*)	3.00
4. Ten Minutes To Daylight (*Winterbotham*)	4.20

Fortunately, the few votes on March that have come in since we printed the scores have not altered the basic standings. For those who may have missed the June issue, it was Merwin, Jr., Garrett, Arr, Dryfoos and Binder — in that order.

Readers' Preference Coupon

CURE, GUARANTEED (*Sherred*) .....
MIRROR, MIRROR (*Bixby*) .....
THE MARVELOUS MOVIE (*Abernathy*) .....
ROSIE LIVED IN A BUBBLE (*Schere*) .....
GUIDE WIRE (*Hensley*) .....
ASYLUM (*Bullock*) .....

Did you like the artwork by Freas? .....
Emsh? ..... *Orban?* ..... *Luton?* .....
Did you like the cover? .....
Shall we continue the departments? (List any you would rather see dropped.) .....
.....
.....

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—Continued from Back Cover

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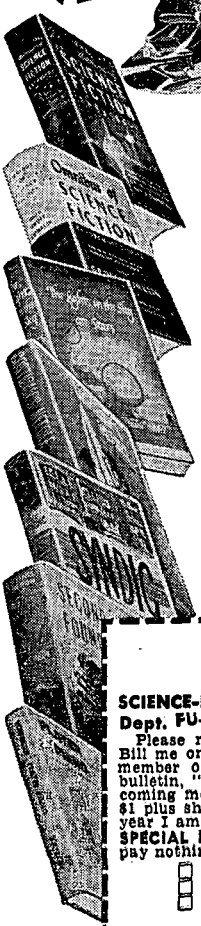

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—Continued on Inside Cover

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